

Research on ethnocultural identity in H. Tajfel's social identity theory and J.C. Turner's self-categorization theory

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Abstract. The article is devoted to the analysis of the phenomenon of ethnocultural identity from the point of view of representatives of the cognitive approach. Ethno-cultural identity is represented as a hierarchy of models that includes social and individual characteristics, Self-images. Categorization and social comparison are recognized as the main mechanisms for the formation of ethno-cultural identity in this area. In the article special attention is paid to the personal factor, namely, personal autonomy and individual peculiarities of the personality development.

1 Introduction

The problem of ethnocultural identity has recently become the subject of increasing scrutiny by philosophers, psychologists, and representatives of other Humanities. Based on their ethnic and cultural identity, people determine their place in the broader context of social reality and build their own life strategy.

Various aspects of the ethnocultural identity phenomenon are the subject of consideration by both domestic and foreign researchers, such as: I.A. Apollonov, I.D. Tarba (2017), D. Cojanu (2014), A. Moll (2012), C. Ward, J. Stuart, L. Kus (2011) and others.

2 Results

In our opinion, the problem of ethnocultural identity is most fully presented within the framework of the cognitive direction: in the works of Henry Tajfel (Social Identity Theory), his student and colleague John Turner (Self – Categorization Theory) and other scientists, their colleagues and followers. The research of these scientists represents a significant step forward in the study of social identity and opens up new opportunities for socio-psychological research of ethnocultural identity as a special case of social identity: in the context of the study of the causes and mechanisms of person's self-identity in the conditions of radical social transformations which are often accompanied by instability of society.

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According to Henri Tajfel, social identity is a part of a person's Self-concept, which is determined by belonging to a social group (or groups) in combination with the value and emotional significance that accompany this belonging [1]. In this definition, at least two fundamental points: the awareness of a person that he/she belongs to a certain group, so that he/she forms one's own image of the Self and the image of the community with which he/she relates oneself, as well as the recognition of the emotional and value significance of group membership for a person.

This interpretation of social identity allows H. Tajfel to make some assumptions about the fact that a person is largely aware of the social world by determining one's place in it.

Firstly, a person tends to maintain a positive identity, which helps to ensure harmony and balance of the image of the social Self and the world around oneself. The loss of positive identity marks the disharmony of the Self and the surrounding world: the disorganization of the inner world of a person inevitably leads to the disorganization of one's impressions of the world around oneself.

Secondly, positive identity is achieved through the processes of categorizing the social world and identifying a person with certain categories. This is accompanied by a process of differentiating the membership category from other categories, which expands the perception of the world around us.

Thirdly, differentiated analysis of the social structure is carried out by comparing 'own' group with the 'others' according to the preferred dimensions for the ingroup. It is always human nature to look for and find positive differences, as well as the desire to increase them by showing favoritism to the membership group.

And finally, in the case of a group of belonging negative assessment, a person is looking for an opportunity to leave this group and join another social group that is more important to him/her, that is, some behavioral activity is stimulated.

Thus, H. Tajfel emphasizes that it is very important for a person to have a positive identity in order to perceive the environment as balanced and in 'compliance'. Disharmony prevents adequate behavior in the social world, and the image of this world begins to collapse. This is especially evident in conditions of radical social transformations, when most of the social categories through which people previously defined themselves and their place in society seem to have lost their boundaries and their value, when there is a complete re-evaluation of their group membership and the situation in society as a whole. The attempt made by H. Tajfel to understand and explain specific psychological mechanisms of regulating human consciousness and behavior (including mechanisms for overcoming crises and stressful situations) in the process of internal and external group interaction certainly contributes to the formation of a stable and conscious positive ethno-cultural identity, which, in our opinion, is the only reliable bumper on the way of forming irrational ethnic intolerance and on the way of ethnic marginality.

In fact, H. Tajfel puts a very important emphasis on the relationship between Man and Change: the fundamental characteristic of the human environment in modern society is social change. Therefore, according To G. M. Andreeva, the interaction of social change and therefore the choice of behavior is always a problem for a person. However, the choice of behavior is determined by understanding one's environment. Therefore, there is no other adequate choice of behavior, except the ability to adequately assess the essence of changes which occur in society [2].

It should be noted, H. Tajfel is a very insightful scientist here. We can say that he was the first who raised the question of the need to construct an image of the social world and the image of the Self in conditions of social instability. The situation that exists not only in Russia, but also in the entire post-Soviet space, is particularly difficult psychologically because in the previous period stability was proclaimed as the official ideology and organization of the entire life of society. The whole way of life in the past contained a positive

assessment of any inviolability of the foundations, set by their objective course of history, an unshakable belief in the correctness of decisions made at the level of society. Strength and stability were perceived as the norm, and any loosening of them was nothing as a deviation from the norm. The life orientation of the individual was aimed at absolute stability and steadfastness of the foundations of society, and in no case at transformation. In modern sociocultural conditions, such norms as pluralism of opinions, the permissibility of various options for socio-economic decisions, human rights mean a really new image of society, and replacing one established image with another that is radically different from another is not an easy task for the mass consciousness and for the consciousness of individuals [2].

Each person needs a certain regulation of their life activity, which they can only find in the community of other people. According to Tajfel, in all circumstances, the person perceives the world through belongs to a specific group. Ethnocultural identity is considered by him as a tool of social orientation of the individual; the result of this consideration is the construction by a person not just his/her own image, but also the image of the group with which he/she relates him/herself or does not relate.

So, according to H. Tajfel's theory, a person's awareness of his/her place in the social world is primarily due to belonging to a certain social group (according to H. Tajfel's terminology, 'category' as a cognitive reality) [3].

H. Tajfel refers to the concept of social identity to determine the conditions under which individual behavior of people is fully manifested in the logic of intergroup interactions and then turns into a unified behavior of a representative of a certain community. H. Tajfel considers identity as a cognitive system that regulates all forms of social behavior, which includes two equivalent structures: personal and social identity. Personal identity is a set of individual and personal qualities that distinguish this person from other people. Social identity consists of social-categorical characteristics and is the result of a person's awareness of his/her belonging to a certain community and unity with it.

In accordance with his conceptual position regarding the inconsistency of personal and group principles in a person, H. Tajfel puts all behavioural relations between people on a continuum, the poles of which is interpersonal relations, fully define the individual characteristics of the participants (personal identity) and intergroup relations between specific and clearly identifiable groups, entirely due to the fact of their group membership (social identity) [4]. The location of interaction on this continuum is determined by the interaction situation and its reflection in the participants' minds. If the interaction situation activates individual-personal indicators in the person's mind (that is, personal identity comes first), then the interaction occurs at the interpersonal level, if social-group indicators (that is, social identity comes first), then the person acts as a representative of the group, community.

According to H. Tajfel, in order to achieve a positive self-esteem, a person can choose either interpersonal or intergroup forms of interaction, depending on which path he/she considers the most acceptable for him/herself. This is the reason for the reliance of the individual on social or personal identity, which can enter into certain contradictions in the structure of the individual. More typical, according to some researchers, is the behavior located between these poles [5; 6; 7].

Nevertheless, it is obvious to H. Tajfel that a person's understanding of his/her place in the social world can only occur in inter-group interaction. Moreover, in order for a person to begin to identify oneself with a particular group, it is enough for him/her to have a minimal sense of being a representative of this group [4; 8].

In accordance with tradition of the cognitive approach, H. Tajfel believes that the formation of social identity takes place through three steps:

– the first step: social categorization, that is, a person's understanding of the social environment as the environment consisting of different groups. That is, a person is self-determined as a representative of a certain ethnic community;

– the second step: social identification, that is, a comparison-based choice of the group, community, with which a person relates him/herself;

– the third step: actually social identity, that is, achieving a certain result, full awareness of the person's belonging to the selected group, community.

H. Tajfel assigns a crucial role in the formation of social identity to the social categorization process, which allows a person to organize information about the world around oneself, to self-identify in a social context. In doing so, it proceeds from the fundamental idea of the cognitive approach, according to which people initially tend to group objects or distribute them into categories. Social categorization, according to H. Tajfel, is the understanding and ordering of the social environment in terms of identifying a community that is personally significant for a person, and identifying with it [9]. In other words, the process of social categorization is necessary for a person to systematize one's social experience, as well as for orientation in one's social environment, to determine one's place in the social environment [10].

H. Tajfel comes to the conclusion that in the process of categorization, differences between categories are emphasized and differences between components within one category are weakened [11]. Being categorized as members of a particular social group or community, members of that group or community strive to preserve and maintain a positive social identity. Such a positive assessment of one's ethnic group is a natural socio-psychological mechanism that ensures self-respect at the individual level, and at the group level – the preservation of ethnic culture and its transmission to subsequent generations [12].

Social categorization becomes crucial not when it is presented to individuals from outside, but when it is accepted by them independently. In this case, the categorization becomes self-categorization. However, the fundamental development of this problem is already in the concept of self-categorization, proposed by John Turner, H. Tejfel's disciple and follower. It should be noted that subsequently both Tajfel and Turner concentrated their attention on the process of social identification and its result – social identity, interpreted by them as the result of a multiple system of social identifications, making it the main explanatory principle of social behavior and intergroup interaction [5].

Social identification is the process by which an individual relates oneself to a particular social category, that is, acquires norms and behavioral patterns that are characteristic of his/her own group. Social identification is based on the process of social comparison: a person compares oneself in order to assess one's own position and one's own attitudes [13] the formation of ethno-cultural identity occurs by comparing oneself with representatives of both 'their' group and 'someone else's'.

Social comparison is characterized as a process that transforms perceptual and cognitive attributes into attitudes and actions that provide intergroup differentiation and are associated with the preference of an ingroup over an outgroup [14]. Social comparison allows us to assess a person's belonging to a particular group; this is individual knowledge that a person belongs to a certain social group along with some emotional and valuable personal meaning of group membership [15]. Moreover, when we are in a group of people similar to us, we tend to think of ourselves in terms of our identity, that is, those characteristic features that distinguish us from people who are otherwise similar to us [16]. So, comparison with other people can become a significant source of knowledge about oneselves.

Thus, in order for a person to have a sense of belonging to a certain group or community, it is necessary to compare 'own' community with others. The identity formation is realized through the comparison of a person with representatives of both one's 'own' community and 'not own' one. B. F. Porshnev emphasizes that the constitution of any social community – from the most complex to the simplest one – occurs through the awareness of any 'They' and through the opposition of this 'They' to own 'We' [17]. However, according to B. F. Porshnev, the category 'They' does not imply enmity and war.

Social comparison, according to H. Tajfel, creates conditions for intergroup differentiation which is based on the preference of the ‘own’ group over the ‘other’ group, since different properties of the group, commonalities usually acquire significance in the value correlation with other groups. Based on this, the concept of intergroup differentiation assumes at least two socio-psychological processes associated with the establishment of differences between ‘own’ and ‘foreign’ groups:

- the process of forming intra-group preferences as a manifestation of emotional commitment to their group which is a necessary condition for maintaining the psychological unity of the group;
- the process of inter-group comparison and comparison as an integral condition and prerequisite for coordinated joint activities and inter-group interaction, whatever form this interaction may take [18].

The social identity formation is thus carried out through the processes of social categorization and social comparison. If the process of social comparison, together with the need for positive identity, implements selective identification of intergroup differences in favor of one’s own group, then the categorization process reveals distinctive features. This happens as follows: a person studies and masters the normative tendencies of ‘own’ group. Since normative trends are directly related to certain behaviors, following these behaviors and mastering the corresponding attitudes are signs of belonging to this social group (category).

Logically connected with the theory of H. Tajfel’s Social Identity concept John Charles Turner’s Self-Categorization Theory. In Tajfel and Turner’s concepts reveals the mechanism of building at least two components of the social world: the image of the Self and the image of a social group. However, there are differences in their approaches to the interpretation of social identity in terms of the reasons for the formation and maintenance of social identity. If H. Tajfel considers social identity from the perspective of ‘connectedness’ with the group, that is, as a mechanism of intergroup relations, J. Turner believes that ‘social identity includes a social categorization of oneself, which causes group phenomena [19].

Within the framework of the self-categorization theory, the process of forming a social identity is a mechanism of social cognition, namely, self-knowledge in the social world. From this point of view, J. Turner and his colleagues emphasize the importance of identity for a person. Social identity is not a personal identity reflected in the mirror of social interaction, but a subjective collective identity that includes ‘Others’ interpreted as members of own group [20].

The main ideas of his concept J. Turner defines as the following: one of the aspects of the Self is the cognitive aspect, the system of self – representations that a person uses to define him/herself. Self-understanding can be seen as self-categorizations, or self-categorizations: cognitive groupings of self-inherent features and the representation of oneself as identical, analogous, equivalent to a certain class of stimuli that is different from another class of stimuli. People can categorize themselves as individuals based on their differences from other people or as social groups in terms of common characteristics that distinguish them from non-members of a given group [13]. Where the appropriate categorization divides individuals into social groups, actions within the context acquire a clear meaning and significance of inter-group relations [19]. That is, as T. G. Stefanenko notes, the process of social categorization, or the process of distributing social events and objects into groups, is necessary for a person to systematize their social experience, as well as for orientation in their social environment, to determine their specific place in society [21].

J. Turner makes the assumption that there are at least three levels of self-categorization that he considers simultaneously as identity levels [22]:

- the highest level, that is, the definition of oneself as part of a broad community that subordinates almost all known groups (this level reflects the existence of a person as a whole);
- the average level, that is, defining yourself in terms of group affiliation, for example, ethno-cultural (this level forms a social identity);
- subordinate, that is, defining oneself in individual, personal qualities as a unique individual (this level forms a personal identity).

Each higher level completely includes the previous one. Comparison and categorization of stimuli is possible only after their similarity to each other is found (after their comparison) at a higher, inclusive level. Categorizing incentives as identical involves comparing them and differentiating them at a lower level. Therefore, as noted by I. R. Sushkov, the processes of comparison and categorization cannot exist without each other [23].

According to Turner, personal and social identities are not so much different forms of identity as different forms of self-categorization: the individual categorizes him/herself within a certain continuum ‘closer’ to one or the other pole [19]. This depends each time on which specific group the identification situation occurs [2].

The results of empirical research give the basis for J. Turner to show that individuality is a dynamic, context-dependent component of the Self, not one’s fixed substratum. Personal identity as a person’s uniqueness is manifested in the differences from other representatives of ‘own’ group, that is, in situations of intra-group interaction. Social identity is related to the categorization of oneself and others as having similarities with a certain category in contrast to other people belonging to another social category, that is, in situations of inter-group interaction [20]. Social identity (or social self-categorization, according to the terminology of J. Turner and his colleagues) depersonalises perception in terms of group prototypes and transforms grounds for interpersonal preferences from the individual into the prototypical ones [21].

It should be noted that the term ‘depersonalization’ in the concept of J. Turner does not have a negative connotation, it only reflects the processes by which a person’s thinking, perception, and behavior are ordered by group standards (norms, stereotypes, and group prototypes) much more than by individual, personal standards [24].

Thus, in his theory, J. Turner substantiates the mechanism of ethno-cultural identity formation as an integral part of social identity, which is based on the needs of a person in social orientation and belonging to a certain ethnic community. This ethnic community encourages people to categorize themselves and their environment. Despite some differences in the issues of actualization of a particular level of abstraction in self-categorization, the personal and social components of ethno-cultural identity are a single whole.

As for H. Tajfel and J. Turner, the question about the laws of formation and maintenance of a positive ethno-cultural identity by a person is one of the fundamental ones. Inter-ethnic discrimination, that is, the establishment of inter-ethnic differences that are positively valent in favor of one’s own ethnic community, is considered as a manifestation of a person’s inherent need for a positive self-attitude, self-respect. According to Tajfel and Turner’s ideas, each person is characterized by the desire for a positive image-Self. Based on this, scientists come to the conclusion that a person’s desire to achieve and maintain a positive ethno-cultural identity is one of the main regularities in the dynamics of ethno-cultural identity, and ethnic community is a kind of niche that guarantees a certain level of comfortable existence [25].

The main process which drives the updating and formation of ethno-cultural identity as suggested by H. Tajfel and J. Turner, is a process of inter-ethnic differentiation or evaluative comparison. At the same time, according to J. Turner, it is essential that similar, close, relevant ethnic communities be compared, and only the value-significant qualities and characteristics, and not all the parameters of ethnic communities. In this case, we can say that a positive ethno-cultural identity is based on positive, favorable, socially significant

differences between one's ethnic community and another one [24]. In other words, a person will always look for positive differences and strive to increase them, giving preference and showing commitment to 'own' community.

The research program included blank testing, individual interviews, biographical the Volgograd region teachers were respondents.

4 Conclusion

H. Tajfel's social identity theory and J. Turner's self-categorization theory, in our opinion, provides an opportunity to analyze the problem of ethno-cultural identity from the point of view of studying the socio-psychological problems of inter-ethnic interaction, namely, inter-ethnic perception, inter-ethnic tension, ethnocentrism and ethnic intolerance. In general, these concepts allow to identify approaches to solving practical problems of preventing the manifestation of negative attitudes towards other ethnic communities which are defined as the following terms 'inter-ethnic hostility' and 'inter-ethnic discrimination', on the one hand, and to establishing friendly relations and relations between ethnic communities based on cooperation and compromise as a collective solution, on the other hand.

However, in these concepts, the question of what are the mechanisms of formation of ethno-cultural identity remains insufficiently clear. H. Tajfel, J. Turner and their followers proceed from the fact that ethnocultural identity is an initial given, considering, in the words of V.S. Ageev, that the very fact of belonging to an ethnic community makes ethnocultural identity automatic one [5]. We do not bring this axiom in question, but in reality, not everything is so simple and unambiguous. Of course, the biological component of ethnocultural identity as genetically determined, given by nature, cannot be excluded: a person by the fact of his birth belongs to a particular ethnic community. However, we are convinced that ethnocultural identity is formed not so much as a result of the presence of a certain national quality or persistent 'attribution' of a certain national attribute to a person by other people (although this is not excluded in everyday terms), but in the process of individual self-determination and self-realization. The surname of a person with clearly expressed ethnic indicators does not yet determine their ethno-cultural identity.

Ethnocultural identity and everything connected with it: national, ethno-cultural roots – belong to the most important values and meanings of a person. But they serve as a support, not a limiter. These meanings and values are not automatic, self-actuating mechanisms; their influence on human life is realized only through the self-determination of the subject in relation to them, through the awareness and choice of the person oneself.

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