

ICPE 2018
International Conference on Psychology and Education

**SPECIFIC FEATURES OF ETHNIC IDENTITY IN CHILDREN
FROM MIXED MARRIAGES**

O. Yu. Zotova (a)*, L. V. Tarasova (a), O. S. Solodukhina (a), Z. F. Fairushina (a)
*Corresponding author

(a) Liberal Arts University-University for Humanities, Yekaterinburg, Russia, oiambusheva@mail.ru

Abstract

This study discloses specifics of ethnic identity in children whose parents belong to different ethnicities and cultures. The acquisition of knowledge about one's ethnic origin takes place during childhood, then, during adolescence, the teenager needs to make a choice what ethnicity he belongs to "trying on" different ethnic roles. The study was aimed at investigating peculiarities of ethnic identity in siblings born and raised in bi-national families. The sample consisted of 18-23 olds from Yekaterinburg (The Russian Federation) and Ufa (Bashkortostan): 27 respondents were from bi-national and 27 were from mono-ethnic families. It was found that the type of parents' marriage (mono-ethnic, inter-ethnic) affects and reflects ethnic identity of the child. Bi-national children appear to exhibit less-pronounced ethnic identity compared to children from mono-ethnic families. The affective component of ethnic identity showed an inverse trend – it was higher in mono-nationals. Bi-nationals are also characterized by ethno-nihilism and positive assessment of their ethnicity, tolerance to their own and other nationalities. The indicator of ethnic indifference is more expressed in children born to one-nation parents. It was proved that children of multinational descent assess their identity in a more positive and emotional way than their peers from mono-ethnic marriages.

© 2018 Published by Future Academy www.FutureAcademy.org.UK

Keywords: Ethnic identity, inter-ethnic marriages, teenagers.



1. Introduction

Ethnic identity is a multidisciplinary issue. Over the last decades this problem has been highlighted not only by sociologists but also philosophers, anthropologists, psychologists and representatives of other social sciences (Dirks, 2001; Mafeje, 1971; Mamdani, 1996, Steinberg, 2001). Unfailing interest and close attention paid to the problem of inter-ethnic relationships by both Western (M. Brewer, T. D. Campbell, O. Tzeng, J. Jackson, L. Sagiv, S. Schwartz, F. Moghaddam, D. Taylor, etc.) and Russian researchers (L. D. Gudkov, M. A. Nefyodov, L. M. Drobizheva, A. N. Tatarko, N. M. Lebedeva, G. U. Soldatova, and others) proves the significance of this subject-matter.

It should be noted that the ongoing processes of globalization have brought about remarkable changes in the nature of the phenomenon of ethnic identity. Intensive cultural mobility and ethnicity mix make the problem of preserving ethnic identity even more acute. R. Brubaker and his colleagues state that identity emerges in a society by means of “socio-common understanding of social objects” (Brubaker et al., 2003. p. 52). In A. A. Susokolov opinion, ethnic identity can and should be considered as a specific “information filter” which allows for structuring and organizing the perception of the external world (Susokolov, 1990).

Ethnic identity is often associated with ethnic patriotism (Kleingeld, 2000), “ethnic nationalism” (Nairn, 1998), and ethnic belonging is seen as pre-modern core (Hall, 1998), a myth (Gellner, 2004), or an imagined unity (Anderson, 2002).

The number of people who identify themselves with more than one ethnic group increases every year and the increased social mobility adds its share to this growth. Language is not only a means of communication, it is also a symbol of social and group identity, emblem of group membership and solidarity and serves several communication functions: on the one hand, is it a tool for thinking and learning, on the other – it gives a sense of belonging and identity (Engen & Kulbrandstad, 2004; Grosjean, 1982).

T. Skutnabb-Kangas ties up bicultural identity with positive attitude and identification with two cultures when an individual can have emotional and personal bonding with both cultures (Skutnabb-Kangas, 1981). In bilingual families their member can have different emotional bonds with languages used at home.

Language attitudes play an important role in the society where various languages coexist. When two languages are exploited one of them is likely to be taken as more prestigious, sonorous, expressive than the other (Grosjean, 1982). And when one language comes under attack of a dominant language group attitude to the mono-language can degrade (Eidheim, 1979/1994; Romaine, 1995).

Specific features of identity in mixed-nation marriages where husband and wife represent different cultures arouse great interest. In such families the child faces a problem of self-identification as he seems to be torn between two different cultures especially if father and mother cherish traditions of their native culture and speak their native languages.

There exists a fair amount of research efforts on the role of parental values and beliefs that impact the development of children’s ethnic identity (Ibrahim, 1993; Inman et al., 2007). The study undertaken by A. Inman and his colleagues showed that preservation of parents-immigrants’ ethnic identity depends on their participation in cultural activities, observance of traditional values, maintenance of family ties and rejection of Western values (i.e. individualism) (Inman et al., 2007).

The acquisition of knowledge about one's ethnic origin takes place during childhood, and the child imitates the life style of the ethnos demonstrated by his close milieu. Then, during adolescence, when the teenager deals with social institutions and contacts with a wider circle of people he/she needs to make a choice what ethnicity he belongs to "trying on" different ethnic roles. "Youth cultural identification often has a transitional nature when identity does not base itself on immediate circle but seeks for new forms in a changing milieu" (Zinchenko et al., 2016. p. 323).

In multinational Russia mixed marriages have become widespread. These marriages are considered to demonstrate true feeling towards the other person and to be the result of raising new generation who find themselves at the crossroad of several ethne in the XX-XXI centuries. Such marriages enrich personality due to diversified cultural heritage of allied ethne. In this situation, the task of insights into specifics of ethnic identity in mixed-nation marriages as well as the disclosure of their identity types and the pronouncement of cognitive and affective components in ethnic identity becomes topical.

2. Problem Statement

In spite of the fact that inter-ethnic identity research has been the focus of many sciences giving scholars the possibility of applying a wide range of approaches and contexts the construct of identity restlessly opens new facets and prospects. Dimensionality acts as an ontological characteristic of inter-ethnic identity, which opens the room for both the integration of existing ideas and the exploration of novel relevant vectors of research. In this light, the study into inter-ethnic differentiation, transformation of ethnic identity evolving under multi-ethnic, inter-nation interaction gains additional relevance for psychologists.

3. Research Questions

1. Do children born to multinational parents have specific features in the structure of ethnic identity (in the pronouncement of ethnic identity, its components, and types of ethnic identity)?
2. Is there any correlation between multinationals and ethnic groups of their parents? What sort of correlation is it?

4. Purpose of the Study

The aim of the study was to investigate specific features of ethnic identity in mixed-nation marriages' children.

The realization of this aim supposed solving the following objectives:

1. To assess the pronouncement of cognitive and affective components in ethnic identity of bi-nationals;
2. To identify the type of ethnic identity characteristic of bi-nationals;
3. To reveal absence/presence of relationship between bi-nationals and ethnic groups of their parents.

5. Research Methods

5.1. Subjects

The sample consisted of 18-23 olds from Yekaterinburg (The Russian Federation) and Ufa (Bashkortostan): 27 respondents were from multinational and 27 were from mono-ethnic families. The respondents were equaled by sex.

5.2. Measures and tools

In the course of the study the following methods were applied:

- J. S. Phinney technique for measuring the pronouncement of ethnic identity;
- a Questionnaire “Types of Ethnic Identity” by G. U. Soldatova and S. V. Ryzhova;
- A. N. Tatarko and N. M. Lebedeva technique for assessing positivity and uncertainty of ethnic identity;
- a survey for collecting data on the respondents’ ethnic group, their parents’ ethnicity (-ies) and demographics including place of residence.

In the course of the results processing methods of descriptive statistics, Spearman’s rank correlation coefficient, t-test for two independent variables were used. The data obtained were processed with the use of SPSS 20.0 package.

6. Findings

To assess the pronouncement of ethnic identity and participation of cognitive and affective components the comparative analysis of the data of bi-national and mono-nationals was carried out, i.e. the comparison was based on the type of family (mono- or bi-national family).

Table 01. Comparative analysis of Ethnic Identity Pronouncement, its Cognitive and Affective Components (n1=27, n2=26)

Elements of analysis	Group 1	Group 2	Leven’s test for equality of variances		t-test for equality of mean values	
			F	p	t	p
Pronouncement of ethnic identity	M=1.89; SD=0.605	M=2.27; SD=0.511	0.252	0.618	2.424	0.019
Pronouncement of ethnic identity cognitive component	M=1.99; SD=0.685	M=1.60; SD=0.548	1.831	0.182	2.305	0.025
Pronouncement of ethnic identity affective component	M=1.75; SD=0.695	M=2.44; SD=0.494	1.880	0.176	4.150	0.000

Thus, differences for parameters are statistically significant at the high level of validity. Leven’s test for equality of variances indicates that variances of two distributions are not statistically significant; hence, the application of t-test is correct.

In order to assess ethnic identity types, attitudes towards the respondents’ (mono and bi-nationals) own and outsiders’ ethnic groups the questionnaire “Types of Ethnic Identity” by G. U. Soldatova and S. V. Ryzhova was used.

Table 02. Comparative analysis of Ethnic Identity Elements (n1=27, n2=26)

Type of ethnic identity	Group 1	Group 2	Leven's test for equality of variances		t-test for equality of mean values	
			F	p	t	p
Ethno nihilism	M=2.26; SD=1.228	M=1.58 SD=0.809	0.951	0.334	-2.380	0.021
Ethnic indifference	M=3.96; SD=0.980	M=4.46; SD=0.706	0.51	0.823	2.118	0.039
Positive ethnic identity	M=5.15; SD=0.602	M=4.85; SD=0.368	3.855	0.055	-2.195	0.033
Ethno egoism	M=2.37; SD=0.967	M=3.00; SD=1.058	0.589	0.447	2.263	0.028
Ethno isolationism	M=1.96; SD=0.808	M=2.58; SD=1.065	2.875	0.096	2.371	0.022
Ethno fanaticism	M=2.00; SD=1.109	M=2.65; SD=1.231	0.022	0.883	2.033	0.047

The analysis showed significant differences between the respondents of the two comparison groups in each type of identity.

At the next stage of the data analysis estimates of positivity and uncertainty of ethnic identity for the respondents born to mono-ethnic and bi-national parents were matched.

Table 03. Comparative Analysis of Positivity and Uncertainty of Ethnic Identity (n1=27, n2=26)

Elements of analysis	Group 1	Group 2	Leven's test for equality of variances		t-test for equality of mean values	
			F	p	t	p
Positivity of ethnic identity	M=4.47; SD=0.821	M=4.00; SD=0.846	0.092	0.763	-2.062	0.044
Uncertainty of ethnic identity	M=2.32; SD=0.778	M=1.91; SD=0.969	.226	0.636	-1.704	0.094

The obtained level of significance resulted from t-test for equality of mean values testifies to the fact that there exist significant distinctions in the pronouncement of positive ethnic identity in mono-national and bi-nationals. Using mean value as the base one may note that bi-nationals evaluate their ethnicity higher than mono-nationals. The most probable explanation is that this group' representatives can choose to what ethnos to belong. So, the results confirm differences revealed earlier in affective component of bi-nationals and mono-nationals.

To find out whether there is any correlation between the ethnic group of the bi-national and the ethnic group of his/her parents further analysis was conducted.

First, self-attributed ethnic groups of the respondents were analyzed.

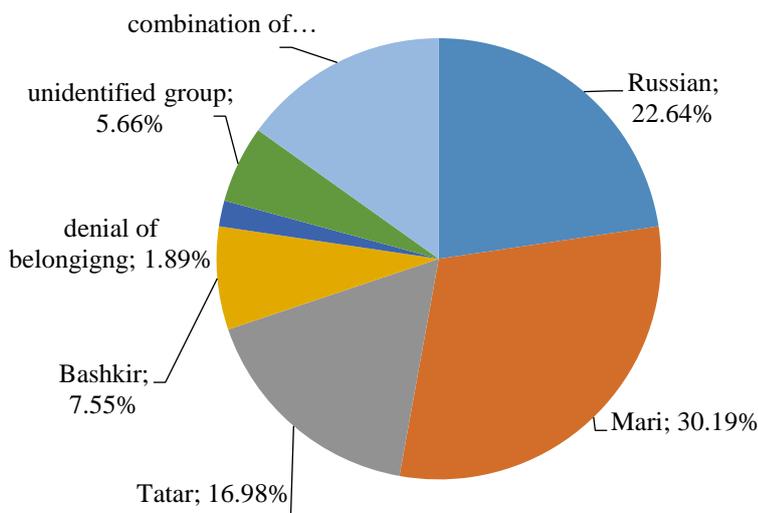


Figure 01. Ethnic Groups Self-Attributed by the Respondents

The correlation analysis between Ethnic Identity variables (mono-ethnic, bi-ethnic, unidentified, denial) and “Ethnic Family” (mono-ethnic, bi-national) revealed loosely positive correlation – $r\text{-Spearman}=0.499$ when $p=0.000$. So, one can note regular coincidence of the type of ethnic family with the type of ethnic identity (mono-ethnic family – mono-ethnic identity and, correspondingly, bi-national family and bi-national type of identity).

In order to find out the nature of relationship between the bi-national’ ethnic group with the group of his/her parents the Spearman’s correlation t-test was used. The analysis was conducted only for the group of bi-nationals since the ethnic group of mono-nationals completely matched the ethnic group of their parents.

The correlation analysis between the variables “Own Ethnic Group” and “Mother Ethnic Group” detected no significant correlation while upon matching “Own Ethnic Group” and “Father Ethnic Group” variables loosely positive correlation was traced – $r\text{-Spearman}=0.469$ where $p\leq 0.01$. Therefore, one can drive to the conclusion that children from inter-ethnic marriages follow the steps of their father in choosing their ethnicity.

7. Conclusion

The study conducted allowed us to explore one of the aspects of ethnic identity transformation resulting from multi-ethnic interaction and to reveal specific features of ethnic identity in children born and raised in bi-national families.

First, it was found that the type of parents’ marriage (mono-ethnic, inter-ethnic) influences and reflects the child’s ethnic identity, i.e., there exists correlation between the type of ethnic family and the type of ethnic identity (mono-ethnic family-mono-ethnic identity and, correspondingly, bi-national family-bi-national type of identity).

Second, bi-nationals have such specific features of ethnic identity as lower pronouncement of ethnic identity compared to mono-nationals. The possibility is that children from inter-ethnic marriages have the

opportunity to choose and, consequently, when they face difficulty in identifying themselves with this or that ethnos the pronouncement of ethnic identity decreases. Mono-nationals do not experience this challenge. In addition, the pronouncement of cognitive component is also higher in children from bi-national families. It can be associated with the fact that in case of mono-nationals fewer ethno-differentiating components are required for ethnic identification as they as well as their parents are of the same nationality and have no need for gaining new knowledge about their ethnos.

The affective component of ethnic identity showed an inverse trend – it was higher in mono-nationals. I.e., on children from this type of ethnic family the appreciation of their ethnic identity has a greater emotional hold; there is no need for them to obtain new knowledge about their ethnicity, they just experience a sense of their belonging to this ethnos. Thus, in this case the pronouncement of cognitive and affective components is balanced in the structure of ethnic identity.

Third, it was revealed that bi-nationals are characterized by ethno-nihilism and positive assessment of their ethnicity. They also exhibit tolerance to their own and other nationalities. The representatives of this group are not prone to discrimination in inter-ethnic relationships. The indicator of ethnic indifference is more expressed in children born to one-nation parents. It is explained by irrelevance of their ethnicity. By contrast, by living and being raised in two – culture family bi-nationals are provided with the opportunity to learn ethno-differentiating factors which represent the cognitive component, and, consequently, a chance of blurring ethnic lines lowers.

In addition, children of multinational descent assess their identity in a more positive and emotional way than their peers from mono-ethnic marriages.

Fourth, it was found that bi-nationals make the choice of their ethnicity in favor of their fathers' ethnic identity. This fact allows, to some extent, for clarifying aspects of inter-ethnic differentiation, transformation of ethnic identity taking place under multi-ethnic, inter-nation interaction.

Therefore, the results obtained in the course of the study empirically justify the theoretical approach for understanding inter-nation interactions as a process whose main outcome is transformation of ethnic identity. The findings can be used for further development of the theoretical concept of inter-nation, inter-ethnic interactions and their intensification.

Acknowledgments

The article was supported with a grant from the Russian Science Foundation (project № 18-18-00112).

References

- Anderson, B. (2002). *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the origin and spread of nationalism*. London: Verso.
- Brubaker, R., Loveman, M. & Stamatov, P. (2003). Ethnicity as Cognition. *Theory and Society*, 33, 31-64.
- Dirks, N. B. (2001). *Castes of mind: Colonialism and the making of modern India*. Princeton: Princeton University Press.
- Eidheim, H. (1979/1994). When ethnic identity is a social stigma. In F. Barth (Ed.). *Ethnic groups and boundaries: the social organization of culture difference* (pp. 39-57). Oslo: Universitetsforlaget.
- Engen, T. O., & Kulbrandstad, L. A. (2004). *Tospråklighet, minoritetsspråk og minoritetsundervisning*. Oslo: Gyldendal akademisk.
- Gellner, G. (2004). *Nations and Nationalism*. Oxford: Blackwell.

- Grosjean, F. (1982). *Life with two languages: an introduction to bilingualism*. Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press.
- Hall, J. A. (1998). Introduction. In J. A. Hall (Ed.). *The State of the Nation* (pp. 1-20). Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Ibrahim, F. A. (1993). Existential worldview theory. In J. McFadden (Ed.). *Transcultural counseling* (pp. 23-57). Alexandria, VA: American Counseling Association.
- Inman, A. G., Howard, E. E., Beaumont, R. L. & Walker, J. A. (2007). Cultural transmission: Influence of contextual factors in Asian Indian immigrant parents' experiences. *Journal of Counseling Psychology*, 54, 93-100.
- Kleingeld, P. (2000). Kantian Patriotism. *Philosophy and Public Affairs*, 29(4), 313-341.
- Mafeje, A. (1971). The ideology of tribalism. *Journal of Modern African Studies*, 9(2), 253-261.
- Mamdani, M. (1996). *Citizen and subject: Contemporary Africa and the legacy of late colonialism*. Princeton: Princeton University Press.
- Nairn, T. (1998). The Curse of Rurality: Limits of modernization theory. In J. A. Hall (Ed.). *The State of the Nation* (pp. 107-134). Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Romaine, S. (1995). *Bilingualism*. Oxford: Blackwell.
- Skutnabb-Kangas, T. (1981). *Bilingualism or not: the education of minorities*. Clevedon: Multilingual Matters.
- Steinberg, S. (2001). *The ethnic myth: Race, ethnicity and class in America*. Boston: Beacon Press.
- Susokolov, A. A. (1990). Structural Factors of Ethnos Self-Organization. *Races and Peoples*, 20, 5-40. [in Russian].
- Zinchenko, Y. P., Perelygina, E. B. & Zotova, O. Y. (2016). Perceptions of Extremism in the Youth Daily Consciousness. *Procedia – Social and Behavioral Sciences*, 233, 322-326.