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Research paper

Self-Identification in Mixed Ethnic Family

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Abstract

The article analyzes self-identification processes in mixed ethnic families. Despite the existing opinion that ethnic meaning of many social phenomena gradually disappears from the social context, ethnic identity and self-identification still play a significant role in the organization of everyday life, in the interaction of various social groups. The problem of ethnic identity is manifested in various spheres of human life, including the sphere of family and family relations. On the one hand, in mixed ethnic families, parents can translate the originality of different cultures, traditions, and values to children. On the other hand, some may form ethnic hostility, self-isolation, fears and concerns in them. Moreover, a mixed ethnic family is able to form ethnic marginality among its members. The results of the authors' sociological research led to the conclusion about the specific identity of children in mixed ethnic families living in Russia, where one of the parents is Russian.

Keywords: *Descendants; Ethnic identity; Ethnic marginality; Inter-ethnic marriage; Self-identity.*

1. Introduction

For a long time, it was widely believed that the significance of ethnic identity in people's lives would slowly decline. This was due to several reasons: globalization, blurring the boundaries between cultures, unification of lifestyles, development of personal intelligence, etc.

However, the ethnic factor in the modern world still retains its role, there is an ethnic revival. According to D.K. Tanatova, "Ethnic phenomena, one way or another, relate to almost all aspects of human life and society, including culture, economics, politics, interpersonal, intergroup and international relations" [1, p. 13]. This is because ethnicity creates the space for expressing one's own uniqueness. The phenomenon manifested itself already in the last decade of the 20th century, primarily in the growth of both ethnic and religious identities. People still strive to preserve their ethnocultural heritage. These processes affect Russia as well.

In particular, the results of a number of studies indicate the increase in the number of inter-ethnic marriages and families. Such families are an important resource of inter-ethnic harmony, cross-cultural contact. Family is a keeper and translator of ethnocultural values, it has great influence on the formation of ethnic identity, the behavior of younger generations.

There are global trends that contribute to the growth in the number of inter-ethnic marriages in the world:

1. Active development of migration processes that affect the ethnic structure of the population and inter-ethnic marriages;
2. Development of international labor market;
3. Development of international marriage agencies [2].

The ethnicity of spouses, which refers to the historically established stable set of people who share common features and characteristics of their culture, expresses the social essence of interethnic unions.

The appearance of children in such marriages turns this union into an ethnically mixed family. The inter-ethnic family "is a special type of family since the spouses in it are members of different ethnic groups" [3]. Its important characteristics are:

1.Ethnic composition of the family. In ethnically mixed families, it is important which parent belongs to the ethnic majority. This is due to the fact that the husband and the wife have a different degree of influence on the definition of the language of intra-family communication, choice of education language of children, choice of names for children, etc. Most often the husband has more influence.

2.The language of interfamily communication. Saving the native language in a foreign language environment is possible when the family uses different languages in their communication and in the social environment. Most often, ethnic and linguistic identities are interrelated.

3. Size of the family. In a multi-generation family, the native language and culture are more often preserved.

4.Religion and degree of religiosity of the family members. If the family differs from the ethnic majority not only in language but also in religion, the probability of preserving the conscious ethnic identity will be greater.

5. The level of education of parents and children. The higher the social status of the individual, the more homogeneous language environment surrounds him/her.

6. Occupation, profession of the family members. Knowledge of language of the ethnic majority is necessary where possession gives advantages in obtaining an education, career development, etc. Ethnic entrepreneurship helps to preserve ethnic identity because the workforce consists of members of an ethnic minority, and communication often occurs in the native language.

7. Housing conditions. Living conditions have an impact on the preservation of certain ethnocultural practices.

Features of formation of culture leave their mark on the nature of communication in inter-ethnic families. There are two types of communication: democratic and authoritarian. The first type is characterized by family lifestyle, which is based on selective as-

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similation and acceptance of customs, traditions, norms, values of both spouses. With the authoritarian type of communication, the customs and traditions of one culture dominate another. Usually, superiority goes to the title ethnos in the given region of residence. However, in polyethnic regions, the second type of family structure is not often observed, and there are no attitudes towards ethnic exclusivity [4].

The specific features of life and everyday life in varying degrees, affect the formation of the ethnic identity of children. As noted by V.V. Stepanov and V.A. Tishkov, "conviction prevailed in our everyday and political consciousness, they say, everyone has one nationality and is given to him/her from birth. But the reality is different." [5]. Children in such families act as intermediaries for the transmission of ethnic values. From the early age, an individual learns the cultural elements of several ethnic groups, acting as a transmission link for ethnocultural information between ethnic groups [6]. The main factors that influence the formation of ethnic identity include language, culture, traditions, customs, rituals, and features of ethnocultural contact environment. The formation of ethnic identity occurs during the development of human activity and communication, as well as through awareness of ethnocultural characteristics of the community [7, pp. 81-83]. Ethnic identity occurs through awareness of "common language, territory, culture, religion, customs and rituals, sometimes – appearance and common psychological qualities" [2, pp. 127-135]. Throughout his life, a person is a carrier of ethnic culture, and also maintains awareness of belonging to a particular ethnos. As noted by S.E. Rybakov: "Any other quality of a person associated with identification changes, but the one belonging to the ethnos does not" [8, pp. 358].

Features of ethnic identity of children in mixed ethnic families are as follows:

1. Children from ethnically mixed families have complex, controversial understanding of ethnic identity. Ethnicity carries a more emotional load for them [9, p. 156].
2. People from inter-ethnic family may experience different types of ethnic identity:
- Mono-ethnic identity – attribution of himself/herself to one ethnic group;
- Biethnic identity – attribution of himself/herself to two ethnic groups of varying degrees of intensity;
- Marginal ethnic identity – balancing between both cultures without assimilating the values of any of them;
- Cosmopolitan identity – attribution of himself/herself to broad supranational communities: European, citizen of the world;
- Aethnic identity – the absence of ethnic identity or denial of the significance of ethnicity both in one's life and in society as a whole [10].

1.Children from inter-ethnic families may have unstable and changing ethnic identity, which they can change depending on the situation.

2.For people from ethnically mixed families, there is a discrepancy between self-identity and official ethnicity, which is declared by identity (self-name) and how they are perceived by their environment [11].

3.The discrepancy between self-awareness and recognition, at the time when others do not want to accept the more complex structure of ethnic identity, can lead to internal discomfort or personal conflict in children.

4.In inter-ethnic families, ethnic identity is a constructed dynamic phenomenon. Its formation occurs because of interaction with the ethnic environment, and the change occurs under the influence of subjective and objective factors.

5.Polyethnic families are formed from a variety of combinations that depend on ethnic groups, connecting in marriage, local ethnic interactions, the general ethnic situation in the place of residence of the family, marital attitudes and other conditions affecting the norms of intra-family communication. However, it is possible to identify common features for mixed ethnic families:

1. All inter-ethnic families are based on the intersection of cultures.
2. In such families, life is bicultural, and sometimes multicultural in nature while preserving ethnic specificity.
3. The level of detail is at the intermediate level of ethnicity, to which the parents belong themselves [6].
4. Usually, such families are characterized by bilingualism, which is caused by objective and subjective factors. The first group includes the place of residence and a certain ethnic microenvironment, the second group includes preferences for use of a particular language by adult family members and targeted influence of their relatives. It should be noted that changes in the language sphere also affect the transformation of ethnic identity.

All these factors serve as a good basis for the formation of ethnic marginality among descendants from ethnically mixed families. Ethnic marginality is observed among people from inter-ethnic families and members of ethnic minorities who live in the different ethnic environment.

The ethnic marginality refers to people who are on the verge of two ethnic cultures and participate in the interaction of these cultures: it is most characteristic of the initial stages of acculturation and assimilation [12]. For the first time, this term was used by the American sociologist Robert Ezra Park in his essay "Human Migration and the Marginal Man" in 1928. By a marginal person, he means an individual who is on the border of two different, sometimes conflicting cultures. Marginal personality arises from the natural cultural process that expands the interaction of cultures. Marginality is a side effect of acculturation product, the process of the impact of 2 cultures on each other. Marginal personality exists in two worlds at the same time, therefore, it accepts the values and norms of both worlds [13]. Everett Stonequist continued to develop the ideas of Park and published the monograph "The Marginal Man" in 1937. In this paper, a marginal person is represented as a social subject who participates in a cultural conflict. Such an individual is located on the edge of each of the cultures but does not belong to any of them. The marginal environment is an area of interweaving of two cultures, as well as a space for combining the characteristics of two cultures [14].

The ethnically marginalized people are those who in the process of socialization have not learned the values of any of the ethnic groups and are the most active agents structuring the ethnic group. However, T.G. Stefanenko believes that a person with specific ethnic origin can also be attributed to ethnic marginals if he/she does not want to learn certain cultural norms or behaves in accordance with other sociocultural standards [15, p. 96]. A.S. Kim studied ethnic marginalization, by which he understood the process of losing objective belonging to an ethnic community, the result of which is superficial possession of external forms of culture without penetrating into the ethnic mentality. The author distinguishes ethnic marginality as a state and ethnic marginalization as a process [16, p. 159].

Such individuals may feel inequality of social status of cultures; they are aware of their incomplete joining to the higher status in culture and incomplete break from the initial lower one. Therefore, many ethnic marginal groups are part of nationalist movements and participate in ethnic conflicts. However, it is worth noting that high creative potential is characteristic of marginal mental personality type; therefore, such people often become leaders of ethnic groups, national movements, prominent cultural figures, etc.

2. Methods

The research part is aimed at studying respondents' ethnic identity, which in extreme cases can manifest itself in the form of ethnic marginality. The time of the study: April 2018. The geography of the survey: Moscow, Russia. The economic development of the Russian capital attracts the largest number of labor migrants, which contributes to the maximum ethnic diversity, hence a significant number of inter-ethnic marriages and families compared to other regions.

Sampling was of multistage character. The main ethnic groups of Moscow were investigated at the first stage. According to All-Russian population census in 2010, the main ethnic groups living in Moscow were singled out: Ukrainians (154,104 persons), Tatars (149,043 persons), Armenians (106,466 persons), Azerbaijanis (57,123 persons), Jews (53,145 persons), Belarusians (39,225 persons), Georgians (38,934 persons) (Results of All-Russian population census of 2010, 2018). There is a reason to assume that with the representatives of these ethnic groups Russians more often enter inter-ethnic marriages. The second stage was the selection of respondents born in these inter-ethnic families.

Online survey method and in-depth interview method were used. The online survey included 313 respondents, descendants from inter-ethnic families over 18 years old, living in Moscow. By gender, the distribution of respondents was almost uniform (47% men, 53% women).

Seven people participated in the interview with a certain selection criterion: one of the parents belongs to the Russian ethnic group, and the second parent could belong to the following ethnic groups: Azerbaijanis, Armenians, Belarusians, Georgians, Jews, Tatars or Ukrainians. Duration of the interview: 25-30 minutes.

3. Results

The common history, common sources of development for many centuries left a special imprint on the cultural traditions of Russia. Islam together with Christianity made a significant contribution to the formation of Russian civilization [17, p. 71]. Today, the formation of the ethnic identity of children is influenced by the religious affiliation of parents. Most respondents indicated that their parents (71.9%) profess Orthodoxy. Respondents whose parents do not profess any religion are much fewer in number (22%).

The formation of ethnic identity is influenced by all family members who live with their descendants in the same apartment. The majority of respondents live in nuclear families (with parents 95.2%) (Figure 2). Most of the relatives belong to Russian (71%) and Ukrainian ethnic groups (32.3%). In most ethnic families, Russian culture prevails (69.6%) (Figure 1).

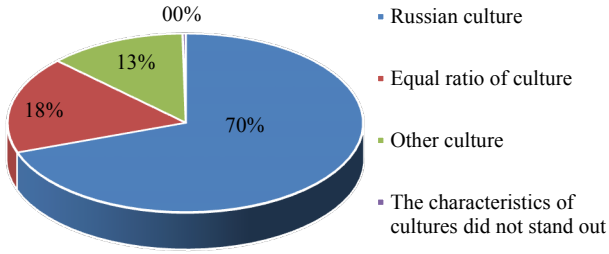


Fig. 1: Distribution of answers to the question "What culture prevails in your family?", (%)

Most respondents noted that there was no ethnic education in their family (59.1%). However, in families, ethnic culture translates from older family members to the younger ones (Figure 2).

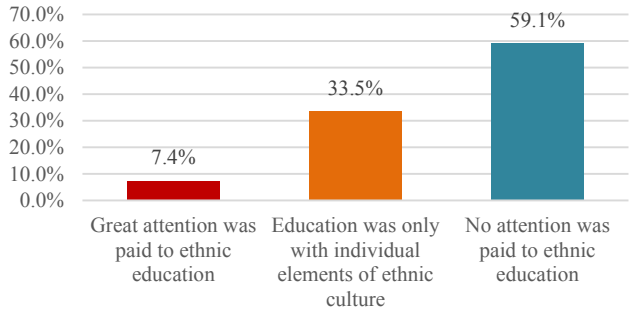


Fig. 2: Distribution of answers to the question "Was there ethnic education from the parents?", (%)

Among the ways of translating elements of ethnic culture, respondents noted the following: visiting the homeland of one of the parents (73.5%), preparing national dishes in the family (46.1%), celebrating national holidays (68.7%), using the parent's language in the family (58.6%). Among the ways of inculcating ethnic culture, ethnocultural events are less common (40.6%), as well as the use of national clothing (10.2%) (Table 1).

Table 1: Distribution of answers to the question "Please, mark whether the listed elements of ethnic culture were used in your education?", (%)

Methods of transferring culture	%
Visit to the motherland of the parent	73.5%
National cuisine	89.1%
National holidays	68.7%
Parent language	58.6%
National Folk Art	46.1%
History of the native country of the parent	65.7%
Traditions and customs	62.5%
Ethno-cultural events	40.6%
National clothes	21.9%

Ethnic identification is sometimes formed on the basis of a person's native language. However, in the inter-ethnic family, this indicator for parents is reflected not only in interfamily communication but also in the knowledge of another language by descendants.

The absolute majority of respondents (98.4%) know Russian. It is followed by Ukrainian (22%) and Tatar (11.2%) languages. The lowest knowledge is observed in Hebrew (2.6%) and Azerbaijani (1.9%) (Figure 3).

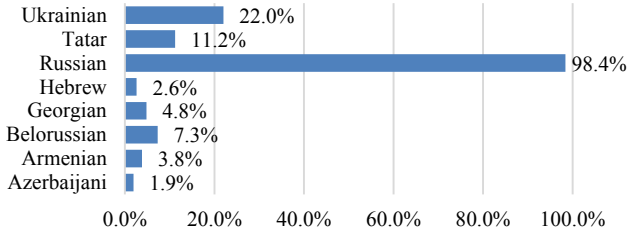


Fig. 3: Distribution of answers to the question "What languages do you know? (There are several possible answers)", (%)

The high level of knowledge of the ethnic language is observed among the respondents (35% speak fluently; 42.7% know the language at the household level) (Figure 4).

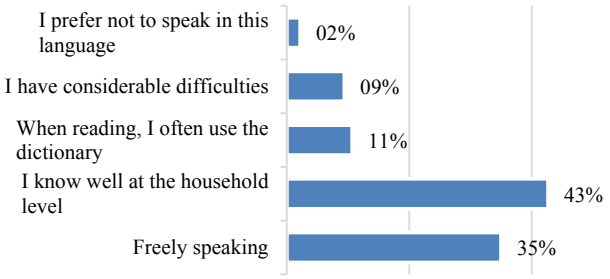


Fig. 4: Distribution of answers to the question "Please rate the level of proficiency in ethnic language?"

The respondents mostly speak ethnic mother tongue with family and relatives (22% and 33.5%, respectively).

When visiting the homeland of one of the parents, descendants from inter-ethnic families have the opportunity to meet and immerse themselves in the culture of the other ethnic group. The study revealed that only a third of respondents (36.1%) never visited the homeland of one of the parents. The interest in studying these places among respondents is quite high, from 3 to 5, as estimated by 83.7% of respondents.

The majority of respondents noted the prevalence of generally accepted traditions and values in the family (44.4%), public holidays (85.9%) and family holidays (89.1%) were more common, and they prepared dishes from both cuisines (80.5%). Most respondents identified themselves as Russians (79.9%). Only a small part (5.1%) of the respondents did not feel belonging to any ethnic group, that is, ethnic marginality was manifested. It should be noted that more than half of the respondents (55.6%) felt that they belong to two ethnic groups at once. This indicates that the respondents had an idea of the cultures of both parents (Figure 5).

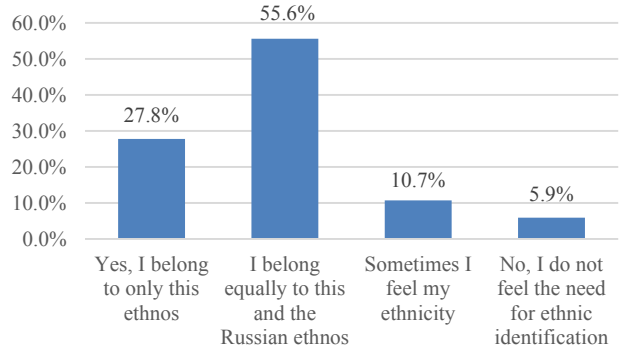


Fig. 5: Distribution of answers to the question "How do you feel that you belong to an ethnos?", (%)

Among the identifying signs, the majority of respondents noted the following: knowledge of the language (74.4%), consanguinity (69%), observance of traditions and customs (59.1%). The main idea of many scholars and experts is confirmed that the assimilation of culture mainly takes place with the help of language.

The ethnic identity of descendants from inter-ethnic families can be changeable depending on the situation. Among the respondents, ethnicity increased with the family (47.6%), with relatives (45.7%) and when visiting the parent's ethnic homeland (48.9%). However, the majority of respondents have a stable ethnic identity (75.4%).

4. Discussion

As noted already, in the 20th century, the idea was born that ethnic identity would soon be less important for people. This was due to a number of world changes that led to the unification of spiritual and material culture. However, in reality, it turned out to be completely different: since the end of the 20th century, the influence of ethnic factors in society has increased, and significance of ethnic and religious identity has also increased.

These processes also occur in Russia, taking into account the particularities of multi-ethnic composition of the country. The active interaction between a large number of ethnic groups can contribute to the emergence of ethnic conflicts and problems, as well as contribute to the increase in inter-ethnic marriages, which, in turn, are the definite indicator of the stability of society.

It is in the family that ethnocultural values are laid down among younger generations in the course of ethnic socialization. However, the process of formation of ethnic identity among descendants from inter-ethnic families can be difficult because parents belong to different ethnic groups and transfer different cultural traditions. Ethnic education in the family greatly influences the ethnic identity of an individual. If in childhood, an individual did not assimilate the cultural characteristics of any of the cultures, the formation of ethnic marginality is possible. Ethnic marginality prevents the assimilation of values, denying each of the cultures.

5. Conclusions

Summarizing the findings, the author can conclude that most of the descendants from inter-ethnic families consider themselves Russians. This is facilitated by the predominance of the following elements: Orthodoxy; the Russian language; common traditions and values; Russian culture, as well as the lack of ethnic education in the family. In many families, joint decision making prevails, it contributes to the equal status of cultures. The predominance of the nuclear type of families indicates that communication with relatives is irregular, and assimilation of ethnic culture often occurs in the homeland of one of the parents. The ethnicity of parents and their native language do not always coincide, the predominance of the Russian language is observed, in which communication in the family most often takes place. There is a predominance of Russian culture, and ethnic is represented mainly by individual elements: cuisine, visiting the homeland of one of the parents, holidays and language. State and family holidays are celebrated, general traditions and values are accepted. Most identify themselves as Russians, and ethnic marginality is manifested in a small proportion of respondents, which indicates that there is no logical explanation for this phenomenon.

Most respondents freely identify themselves with one or two ethnic groups without experiencing any discomfort. They have an understanding of the cultures of both parents. Even family relationships do not affect the identity of descendants of inter-ethnic families. According to a respondent from a Russian-Georgian family, "I no longer maintain relations with my father for more than 12 years, but I still have an interest in the culture". The formation of ethnic identity occurs mainly through the assimilation of the culture of certain ethnos. It is the culture that provides communication and continuity of generations. However, not all cultural elements are equally represented in families and are assimilated by descendants. According to a respondent from a Russian-Armenian family, *"Nobody focused on this; the ratio of cultures was approximately equal and manifested approximately equally. They focused attention on this when they prepared national food, or when memorable dates for Armenians or Russians arrived. In the family, it was customary to celebrate both Russian and Armenian holidays. And also periodically the family went to Armenia to visit relatives."* In Russian-Azerbaijani family, Azerbaijani culture prevailed but this was caused by personal reasons. Here is how the respondent commented*: "The Azerbaijani culture prevailed since the father (Russian) died early. However, I consider myself Russian. And this duality is present throughout life."*

The respondents, in spite of some alienation, observed during the interview, rather confidently identify themselves by ethnicity. This indicates that ethnic identification plays important role in a person's life. The respondents more often identified themselves as

Russian ethnos, however, there were descendants from inter-ethnic families who had ideas about both cultures: *"No, because I clearly understand that I belong to two ethnic groups not only by blood but also by world perception. In both cultures, there is something that I like, and something that I don't"*.

Only one respondent noted that it is quite difficult for her to correlate herself with certain ethnos. It was a girl from the Russian-Tatar family: *"It is difficult to answer unequivocally. Probably more Russian, because the Russian language, cuisine and traditions prevail in the family, but Tatar blood also flows in me, but I don't really know anything about Tatar culture. In Russia, it is considered to determine nationality by father; in my family, dad is Russian, probably I am Russian. I also have not chosen the religion. Mom took me to the mosque a couple of times, I was in the church a couple of times too. But I still cannot choose which religion to profess."*

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