Civic Identity as a Determinant of Cultural Identity in a Multicultural Society: Almaty as a Model

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Abstract

Ethnocultural identification is self-realization that unites an individual with society. Ethnocultural and personal identity leads to the formation and development of one's civic/ethnic identity. Increasing complexity of social relationship structures has transformed different groups. Ethnicity has entered a higher-order identification system (economic, political, ideological), and is acquiring various cultural and political shades, which suggests the presence of dynamic blocks for identification of structures in consciousness that reflect individual response to social changes. Using Almaty as the model, our study clarifies the significance of identities of specific ethnic groups in the formation of cultural identity in a multicultural society. Using the city of Almaty as the model, our study clarifies the significance of the identities of specific ethnic groups in the formation of a cultural identity in a multicultural society. With the acquisition of the State independence of the Republic of Kazakhstan, the issue of ethnicity was a special place. Ethnic Kazakhs got political power and became a privileged group, while the second largest group are ethnic Russians have become "new minority" or even "diaspora" (a term used by some Kazakh ideologues). As a result, this categorization of citizens of one country has contributed to the strengthening of their ethnic identity, which, in turn, has become a problem for the successful formation of a nationwide public-civil identity.

Keywords: *civic identity, culture, ethnic groups, psychology, consciousness, multicultural society*

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1. Introduction

Civic and ethnic identity of Kazakhstan can be a powerful strategic asset in achieving creative solutions to the challenges posed by dynamic social changes. Historically, Kazakhstan has been influenced by the presence of various ethnic groups and cultures, including Kazakh, Russian, Uyghur, Ukrainian, Uzbek, Tatar, and German. This has also had a profound effect on the process of identity formation. Erikson explains that identity of an individual is based on two simultaneous observations: the feeling of self-identity and continuity of its existence in time and space and on the realization of the fact that one's identity and continuity are recognized by others [1]. Identity development is a nonlinear process and it passes through the so-called identity crisis, i.e., phases of conflict between the existing configuration of identity and the changing biological or social niche of the individual's existence. The individual must make efforts to find and adopt new values and activities to form a definitive identity.

It is assumed that the transformation of social norms that regulate human life is carried out ontogenetically from large groups to small groups and then to the individual. Such a case entails the inevitable process of substantial transformation of the original social rules until they are completely rejected. When a person reaches the age of majority, the effects of different social groups become more direct. During internalization, social norms are transformed into internal mechanisms of regulation of human activities, while acquiring the status of social attitudes, beliefs, prejudices, stereotypes, and values among others. These mechanisms regulate processes of ethnocultural and personal identity formation.

Our study was conducted to determine the level of identity or identification in Kazakhstan by using the example of Almaty. Almaty is a city that is home to people of many ethnic groups and religions. It has the largest stream of visitors and immigrants, for whom Almaty has become the second home. Furthermore, Kazakhstan is relatively unknown in the academic research community, and we believe the process of identification formation in the country has not been studied previously. Our research will be useful for academic psychologists to gain insight and conduct similar research in their country.

This study investigates the ethno-cultural and personal identities of modern man culminating into a civic identity. This process is a complex problem owing to the involvement of all people in a system comprising multiple social networks, each network leaving a mark on the history and development of personality.

We propose a model of civic identity that may be represented schematically as a concentric circle, with personality at the center. The outermost circle symbolizes the society of man. Moving inwards, the subsequent circles symbolize the layers (strata) of society: large groups (ethnic, political), small groups (corporations, industrial associations, student groups), and micro groups (different types of families).

This paper is organized as follows. Section II describes the process of conducting the study. Section III presents the results of the study, along with the survey results. We interpret the results for Almaty and provide the scope for wider implications in Section IV.

2. Method

2.1 Identification of urban population

We conducted a city-wide survey in Almaty and respondents included people of all major ethnicities. The total number of respondents was 1300. The first and most extensive "range of identification" of the modern citizen is "civic identity," as shown in Figure 1. This conclusion follows from the fact that 44.2% of the respondents in our study considered themselves primarily to be "citizens of the Republic of Kazakhstan." This identification as citizens must be clearly recognized as positive because it means the predominance of common over private interests. It also suggests that the most important thing is for people to feel involved in their country's affairs. Perhaps this attitude explains Kazakhstan's progress in recent years in developing a sense of belongingness with confidence in the future positive development of the state.

Figure 1: Identification of urban population
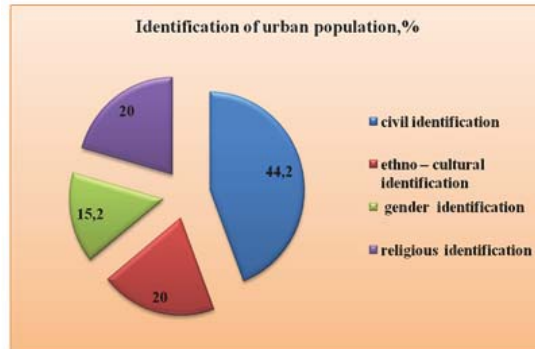
The second "circle of identification" for the average citizen is "ethnocultural identity" and "religious identity." Here we have combined similar statements such as "I feel like a representative of the culture or language community" or "a representative of the nationality." This identification comprises 20% of the respondents. Every fifth citizen believes that the most important thing for him or her is involvement in the native culture, language, and nation. The revival of "ethnic origin," which is typical of many countries in the post-Soviet period of development, is the most common response. In the third place is "gender identity": 15.2% of respondents feel that they are, above all, a woman or a man. In this case, gender identity is replaced by an individualistic identity, and it complements the social nature of civic and ethnocultural identities. In a large city such as Almaty, where there has been a natural weakening of social ties, the lifestyles often do not allow individuals to feel involved in the native culture, and the "internationalization" of all spheres of city life depersonalizes their ethnic characteristics. Moreover, city life dramatically increases the importance of independence and self-identity. Thus, the modern city dweller perceives himself or herself simply as a man or a woman. Of approximately equal importance are two other types of identification, family or clan and settlement ("I am a resident of the city") and cosmopolitan ("I am a citizen of the world"). Indeed, some respondents defined their identity as a "citizen of the universe."

The materials obtained during our research on ethnopsychological studies also allow us to determine the "circle of identification" for the individual ethnic groups in the city. Currently, the Kazakh ethnic group accounts for 63.1% of the population of Almaty and is the largest ethnic group. In contrast to the city-wide position, the Kazakh ethnic group appeared to be more patriotic and recorded a 6% higher civic identity. In addition, they were more likely to present themselves as "citizens of the world." At the same time, fewer Kazakhs identified themselves by gender or as a resident of the city. The Russian ethnic group is currently the second largest ethnic group in the city, comprising 38.8% of the population. In general, their circles of identification did not differ greatly from those of the Kazakh ethnic group. They demonstrate a less pronounced civic identity at 41%, and are also less inclined to identify themselves as an ethnic group or a "citizen of the world." The Russian ethnic group was more likely to express individualistic gender identity or describe themselves as residents of the city.

The position among other ethnic groups, such as Germans and Koreans, is unusual. First, they have a much lower civic identification: Germans, 16.7% and Koreans, 30%. Second, they differ in the prevalence of markedly individualistic preferences: 33.3% of Germans and 50% of Koreans consider themselves, above all, men and women. In addition, 33.3% of the German ethnic group expressed cultural identity. In general, a typology of identity is observed among the ethnic groups, with civic identity gaining predominance. However, it is necessary to pay attention to the position of members of other ethnic groups, including Turks, Tatars, Azeris, and Dungans. They are characterized by a relatively low rate of civic identity (30.8%), and prominent ethnic (26.9%) and religious (3.8%) identities.

3. Discussion

Analysis of the results showed that, along with self-identification, the perception of other people was a decisive factor in the formation of the socio-psychological climate in the city. Interpersonal relations are crucial for the extent to which people are important to one another. Identification is inseparable from interaction with an individual's values. Waterman describes four areas that are most important for identity formation: career choice, decision and re-evaluation of moral and religious beliefs, political views, and development and adoption of a set of social roles [2].

In general, the people of Almaty do not make excessively stringent requirements of one another. Priority is given only to those conditions that are dependent on each individual. At the same time, a comparison with self-identification shows the main difference in the assessment of other people, which is the personal priority of social transformation. L. S. Vygotsky formulated the idea that the processes of the human psyche are based on interpersonal relationships. However, an individual creates his or her own inner world through the internalization of historical forms and activities. Thus, if the most important identities are civic and ethnocultural identities, the identity of significant other people depends on their personal characteristics. A majority of respondents (54.4%) identified "personal qualities" as an important criterion for interpersonal communication.

Figure 2: Identification of criteria
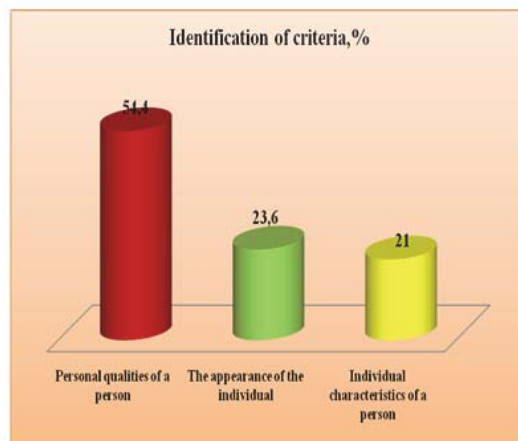
In second place, 23.6% of respondents cited the importance of "the appearance of the individual." In other words, most citizens see themselves primarily as having social identities (citizenship and ethnocultural identity), and evaluate other people according to their personality traits. In our opinion, this is evidence of a general law of the "transitional" post-Soviet world. This is a person who does not judge people primarily on social, ethnic, religious, or political grounds. At the same time, the person evaluates himself as belonging to a community, or a civic or ethnocultural group. However paradoxical this sounds, people are ready to accept others as individuals and themselves as members of a community. Perhaps this is due to the fact that for the modern city dweller, the attitude to a particular community provides an additional factor of security and psychological confidence in a volatile world.

In the third place is the language of communication, which was chosen by 9% of the respondents. Language is a prerequisite for communication. However, consideration of this factor along with the 5% who prioritized "nationality" shows that for some of the city residents, identity is still characterized by a focus on ethnic and interlingual distance.

Analysis of the results of sociological research according to ethnicity allows one to define the typical communication preferences of the main ethnic groups, and through them to evaluate other identifiers. When communicating, the representatives of the Kazakh ethnic group favored qualities such as appearance and language of communication. Age and gender are of definite value to this ethnic group, in addition to nationality and citizenship. The Russian ethnic group had similar semantics, based on the primacy of personality traits, physical appearance, and language of communication. Identification preferences are specific for members of the German, Korean, and Ukrainian ethnic groups, who noted personal and linguistic characteristics. Particularly important personal qualities for the German and Korean ethnic groups are the person's appearance, while for the Ukrainians, it is the language of communication.

All socio-professional groups prioritized personal qualities, but for students and industrial workers, these have a special meaning. Groups identified by the nature of their activities, such as trade, state government, education, and health workers, often have to deal with people of different national and linguistic communities. Communication preferences are specified not only ethnically but also socially and professionally. According to A. Cohen, "ethnicity is, in essence, a form of interaction between cultural groups operating within the overall social context (i. e., within a larger community)." [3] Socio-professional groups choose these or other identifiers, depending on lifestyle, communication style, group preferences, etc. Thus, the appearance of a partner is very important for entrepreneurs and state administrative

ISSN 2039-2117 (online)
ISSN 2039-9340 (print)

Mediterranean Journal of Social Sciences
MCSER Publishing, Rome-Italy

Vol 5 No 20
September 2014

employees, who often have business meetings and negotiations. Unemployed people and housewives emphasized citizenship, which is an unconscious reaction to the presence of foreign workers in the labor force, aggravating the situation in the labor market.

As noted above, the ethnocultural identity is the second highest among all groups and its particular value is the general tendency to maximize people's exposure to the history and culture of its people, to promote the desire to know and follow the tradition to some extent, and to educate children in the national culture. [4] In Almaty, this trend is balanced by an opposite trend toward universalization of cultural preferences, but the ethnic component of the identity of Almaty predominates.

Conventionally, a number of positions with regard to the "ethnic" in human life or types of ethnic identity can be identified as the following:

- "Ethnophobia" or ethnic denial, focusing on the negative aspect of ethnicity: the desire not to state their nationality or that of their partner, and even the fear of discrimination based on ethnicity
- "Ethnic nihilism" or indifference to ethnicity: the view that ethnicity does not solve anything in an individual's life and attention to ethnicity does not define a person
- "Ethnic tolerance," or recognizing the important role of ethnicity in human life and society: a positive attitude toward their own and other ethnic groups, and striving for the development of their ethnic group, without prejudice to the rights of others
- "Ethnocentrism", or an accentuation of ethnicity: the recognition of the superiority of their own ethnic group over all others, the desire to protect the interests of their ethnic origin by any means, including at the expense of the interests of other ethnic groups

The study results revealed that the most common type of ethnic identity in the city of Almaty is "ethnic tolerance," which is supported by more than half of the respondents. Almaty has been an international city for many years, and probably for this reason, people are typically tolerant. In second place, "ethnic nihilism" was supported by more than a fifth of the townspeople. For the metropolis, which is more involved in globalization than other cities, this is also a completely natural phenomenon. "Ethnocentrism" was reported by 16.2% of respondents. In our view, this has several causes, including the growth of ethnic consciousness primarily within the Kazakh ethnic group, a significant influx of migrants from rural areas and repatriates, and the response to illegal migration from neighboring Central Asian states. Finally, "ethnophobia" was the least common position.

A more detailed analysis should help elucidate the reasons for this and other identifications, including the close link between ethnicity and personal identity. We consider separately each of the above-mentioned ethnic identities, paying attention to the processes of cultural and personal determination. "Ethnic Tolerance" is inherent today more in the ethnic groups of Almaty than those of other cities of the world. This position is held more among the socio-professional groups such as industrial workers, businessmen, students, government employees, and education and health workers. These occupational groups are likely to have considerable experience in inter-ethnic communication, which has an impact on their attitudes. Thus, it is necessary to pay attention to the fact that ethnocentrism, which under certain conditions can act as a catalyst for religious intolerance, is today typical of some of the east ethnic groups, such as the Chechens, Kurds, Turks, Ossetians, Azeris, Tajiks, and Turkmen.

For the analysis of ethnic identity, it is important to select the appropriate parameters that usually determine nationality rights. Of the seven proposed criteria, the two more frequently identified were "the culture in which people had been brought up" and "parents' nationality." Thus, the most important identifiers that respondents chose were cultural and blood kinship. The next two criteria identified were a "personal choice" and "belonging to an ethnic group identity, and raising a child." In general, it should be noted that the most important factors for determining ethnicity are those associated with culture, habitat, living conditions, language, ethnicity, parents, and teachers. Next is personal choice, a natural factor, followed by formal features, such as citizenship and entry documents.

In terms of ethnic groups, we observed a marked resemblance to the earlier positions of the Kazakh and Russian ethnic groups. They noted similar parameters of ethnic identification, which were close to the average values. There was, however, one exception concerning the priority of cultural or natural factors of ethnicity. Ethnic Kazakhs placed greater emphasis on the ethnicity of parents, while Russians placed greater emphasis on belonging to an ethnic group and raising a child. This is consistent with the ideas of E. Erikson, who, developing Freud's ideas on the differences between individual and group self-determination, focused on the collective (group) identity. It is important to his conclusion that the main reservoir of interaction between society and the individual, the environment in which collective identity is established, is an ideology. [5] In general, the choice of ethnic identity allows one to make judgments about future adaptation and accommodation facilities.

When considered in comparison with other types of identification, confessional identity (properly "religious

identification"; for the sake of brevity, we assume that these terms are synonymous), as we have seen, has little place in modern urban self-esteem. To better define the characteristics of this type of identity, we asked questions about attitudes to religion and specific religious issues. Identification on the basis of religion in society has shown the superiority of loyalty to religion. Thus, the most common response, by more than half of the respondents, was "I am a believer, but not involved in religious life."

We have identified six types of relationships for confessional identity: two refer to religion, two to nonreligious but tolerant attitudes toward religion, religious, atheism and nihilism. More specifically, these relationships are defined as follows:

- "Active religiousness" requires participation in a religious community, observance of religious requirements, and performance of rites
- "Cultural religion" indicates some recognition of belief, but without the observance of religious rules and regulations and without active participation in the religious community or situational involvement in religious ceremonies
- "Cultural and religious irreligion" (the paradoxical nature of the term reflects the real contradictions of this position) is close to the previous category and is specified as a situational participation in religious ceremonies, but with the main difference of self-identification as an unbeliever
- "Tolerant attitude toward religion" is respect for the faith and for the ability of the faithful to participate in some religious rites
- "Religious nihilism" denotes indifference to matters of religion and faith and the failure to exercise an ideological position with respect to religion
- "Atheism" is characterized by the negation of religion, negative attitudes to faith and belief

Analysis of the results shows that at present the most common position, which is several times more common than the others, is "cultural religion." The proportion of this group of citizens was greater than all others combined. "Active religiousness" was reported by only 18.4% of residents of Almaty. Nevertheless, this is a very large proportion of the city's population, whose interests and needs cannot be ignored by city officials and urban policy. Of the respondents, 11.6% adhere to religious customs. Notably, atheism was reported by only 0.6% of respondents, and religious nihilism by only 7.6%. This is less than a tenth of those reporting a positive attitude to religion, from which it can be soundly concluded that religion represents a significant cultural and spiritual phenomenon of the modern city dweller.

Figure 3: Religiousness of ethnic groups in Almaty, %
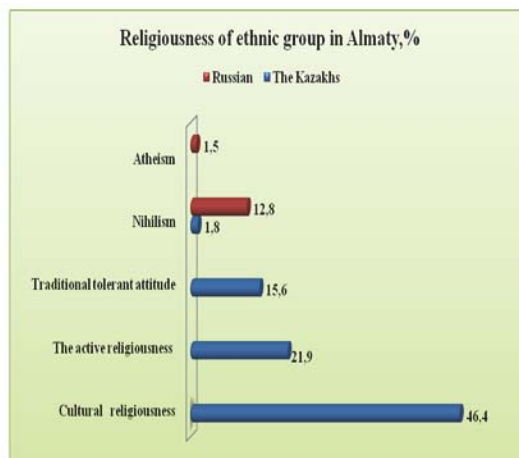
The ethnic groups of the city are quite different from one another in relation to the dominance of religion. The Kazakh ethnic group is in all respects similar to the overall position. Their "cultural religion" stands at 46.4%, "active religiousness" at 21.9%, "traditional" and "tolerant" attitudes at 15.6%, with "atheists" and "nihilists" at nil and only 1.8%, respectively. Ethnic Germans and members of other ethnic groups (Tatars, Uzbeks, Kurds, Turks, Azeris, and Uighurs) were comparatively more religious. In contrast, the level of religiousness among the Russians and Koreans is much lower.

Among the Russians, 12.8% are "religious nihilists" and 1.5% are atheists. A fifth of all Korean respondents are "religious nihilists."

With regard to confessional identification, as distinct from religion in general, followers of Islam were the majority of those who described themselves as believers, or adhering to religious rites. In second place, Ukrainians were the only ethnic group who can be regarded as fully confessional. Almost 90% of them considered themselves to be Orthodox, the rest being unbelievers. Uighurs also had a high degree of confessional identification. Ethnic religious preferences of the Germans were distributed between Catholicism, Protestantism, and Judaism, and the Korean ethnic group between Orthodoxy, Islam, and Catholicism.

The highest degree of differentiation along ethnic religious lines was shown by the Kazakh and Russian ethnic groups in Almaty. Representatives of ethnic Kazakhs reported belonging to all religions other than Buddhism. Although only a small proportion belonged to religions other than Islam, this revealed a process of fragmentation of the ethnic group, which is likely to increase. [6]

4. Acknowledgments

5. Conclusion

The study results and the empirical data, in general, indicate the validity of our theoretical modeling of the multiple levels of determination of ethnopsychological phenomena that accompany the processes of ethnocultural and personal identity formation. Ethnic groups differ in the nature of their participation in nation-building and other specific factors in determining the dynamics of cultural development.

This study of civic identity in a multicultural society has allowed us to clarify features of ethnocultural and personal identity, which manifest themselves in the form of communication based on mutual respect between ethnic groups and interpersonal tolerance, which is undoubtedly a factor that promotes inter-ethnic and inter-religious harmony.

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