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MAINTENANCE OF CULTURAL IDENTITY THROUGH ETHNOCENTRISM

У статті предстало головні аспекти етноцентризму як способу збереження культурної ідентичності. Так як етноцентризм зазвичай сприймається як негативний феномен, у статті представлено протилежне уявлення. Після аналізу, було визначено, що етноцентризм являється одним із кращих способів збереження культурної ідентичності.

Ключові слова: етноцентризм, гнучкий етноцентризм, негнучкий етноцентризм, етнос, культура, етнічна свідомість, ідентичність, інгрупа, аутгрупа.

The article presents main aspects of ethnocentrism as a mechanism to save cultural identity. Since ethnocentrism is usually perceived as a negative phenomenon, we try to present it from another side. After conducting the research, we come to the conclusion that ethnocentrism is one of the best ways preserve and maintain ethnic identity.

Keywords: ethnocentrism, flexible ethnocentrism, non-flexible ethnocentrism, ethnicity, culture, ethnic consciousness, identity, in-groups, out-groups.

Introduction. Culture regulates vital functions, sets the standards of conduct. It often reflects social consciousness which is presented in ethnocentrism. The latter, in turn, is a part of the psychological mechanism of everyday existence. It performs combining function: unites people and culture. It plays a significant role in the social and civic integration of ethnic cohesion around the culture of the people, its customs, and traditions.

Literature Review. The concept of “ethnocentrism” was offered by Austrian sociologist I. Gumplowicz in 1883, and American anthropologist U.

Samner gave socio-psychological characteristics of ethnocentrism in 1906. Ethnocentrism (from the Greek. ἔθνος – people, tribe; lat. Centrum – center of the circle) is a human tendency to perceive, interpret the phenomena of life and behavior of other people through the prism of cultural values of their ethnic group as a standard. The phenomenon of ethnocentrism occurs when the benefits of the people, their relationships, culture, values, psychological composition of the country or region becomes excessively amplified [5]. Dong, Day & Collaço (2008) state that ethnocentrism is a human feature to perceive and evaluate life events through the prism of customs and values of the personal ethnic group which is accepted as optimum [9]. It depends on the psychological characteristics of individuals who form an ethnic community. At the individual level, it includes intragroup loyalty, ethnocentric hostility, rigidity, and authoritarianism. Thus, the trend toward authoritarian conformity in social reference group forms a negative attitude to people outside this group.

I. Danyliuk (2010) specifically points out the research on ethnocentrism, conducted under the supervision of D. Campbell (1972), which showed that all people tend to:

- 1) consider everything that happens in their culture as natural and correct, while others is perceived as wrong;
- 2) consider the customs of their group as the universal: what is good for us is good for others;
- 3) consider the rules, roles, and values of their group as certainly correct;
- 4) consider assistance and cooperation with members of their group as natural;
- 5) proud of their community;
- 6) act to make the representatives of their group feel victorious;
- 7) feel hostility to outside groups.

These signs of ethnocentrism are formed by positive ethnic identity [1].

According to D. Matsumoto (2001), ethnocentrism can be presented in several psychological phenomena: a) socialization and annexation to the culture (inculturation) contribute to the formation ethnocentric positions; b) expectations regarding the perception of others, interpreting their behavior, judgments about the behavior lead to the fact that people believe that the lessons of the rules under which they are trained, should be the same for other people that belonging to another cultural environment; c) emotional reactions inherent in the people are usually associated with judgments and expectations that may be expressed in pleasure to indignation, hostility and frustration [11]. In addition, ethnocentrism, according to D. Matsumoto (2001), is of two types: flexible and rigid. Flexible ethnocentrism occurs when people believe that their culture

is better, but find ways to make adjustments in the steel customs and traditions when they see it necessary in certain circumstances. Flexible ethnocentrism facilitates the perception of foreign cultures; people learn to see the world from a different perspective, to understand other cultures and find something in common in the behavior and thus be loyal to other people. The result of a manifestation of ethnocentrism appears in the ability to recognize the superiority of other nations in every sphere of life, from cuisine to advances in the industry. Rigid ethnocentrism is presented in the inability to soberly assess the significance of the achievements of foreign cultures and to go beyond the focus on their own culture. Flexible ethnocentrism demonstrates the ability to see the world from different perspectives and recognize the existence of differences between cultural values, it creates new notions and leads to the enrichment of experience in cross-cultural interaction [11].

Historically, the first form of ethnocentrism has psychobiological aspect. This initial “biological” form of ethnocentrism reflects anxiety to anything unknown that frightened primitive people and helped them survive, causing a reaction similar to the instinct of animals that could successfully distinguish predator that represents a threat. Arguably, ethnocentrism began to form together with the emergence of the social identity of tribes, families. C. Darwin (1874) said that primitive peoples showed sympathy to their own tribe, not confessing hostility against other tribes as a crime. In his opinion, a clear link to inter-group competition and intra-collaboration is the core of ethnocentric relationship in human evolution [cited by 8]. The evolutionary purpose of ethnocentrism is to form a cohesion of group members to the enemy opposition and preserve own integrity. That phenomenon carried a distinct ethnic group value for a long time. Furthermore, from the moment of the development of human communities and the creation of specific culture, the emergence of cultural ethnocentrism based on cultural differences could be argued. Own culture of an individual provides a reference basis for the perception and assessment of the surrounding world.

According to W. Sumner (2013), single-ethnicity groups have own customs, culture, and norms of behavior. They identify themselves as “we” and share common ideals and to the other cultures they experience fear and distrust. What is happening in their culture is perceived as universal and natural, and what is going on in the culture of others is perceived as wrong [13]. Thus, the prerequisite for ethnocentrism is an intragroup affiliation, which leads to the division of the world into “own” and “alien”, “us” and “them”, which, according to Berman, Berger and Gutmann (2000) is common for any unified social structures [4].

Ethnocentrism is formed within the personality on its psychological level. By creating own moral and cultural basis, people socialize and gain new features and characteristics of human communication and interaction. Any person tends to combine with others, who share similar norms and ideals, and further developments in such connection enrich the range of human relations. As a result, the models created by one person are complemented by the models created by the other person. In the process of the indicated enrichment, the entire system of values is formed, leading to the formation of ethnicity. Individuals that belong to this ethnic group have a common position, life outlook [1]. In addition, Danyliuk (2010) states that there are two scientific views on the question of the genesis of ethnocentrism. According to the first one, the roots of ethnocentrism are presented in the relationships between groups: they are competing for resources that are lacking at all, leading to wars and hatred, exacerbated by aggressive wing members of one ethnic group to representatives of the other. This is the basis which generates ethnocentrism. The second view states that ethnocentrism has individual roots. It shows that it is directed by internal psychological states that control individual role in intergroup interaction [1].

O. Ulibina (2001) states that ethnocentrism is quite normal, which is composed of the need for social identity, pledged sociogenetic human evolution. Analyzing ethnocentrism, the researcher concludes that this category is one of the most archaic in the mind of modern people since it follows the early level of development when what is called individual has not yet been allocated out of the public. Own studies allow the researcher to view ethnocentrism as a component of social perception that exists in ordinary consciousness, regardless of the actual distribution groups. Perceiving other people, an individual tends to estimate them as “own-good” or “alien-bad”, but the real integration into artificial or natural groups provide an opportunity to realize this aspiration [3]. The phenomenon of ethnocentrism has positive and negative consequences. The positive can be attributed to patriotism, respect for own traditions, support and protection of the cultural heritage of people, strengthening solidarity between people. The downside of manifestation of ethnocentrism is an absolute attitude applied to own culture; a nation may have a prejudice about other cultures and own reassessment of others. This inevitably leads to aggression and hostility, which results in conflict, confrontation, manifestations of nationalism.

S. Freud (1985) observed ethnocentrism as a form of collective narcissism. Sexual desires, in his opinion, create a relationship between individuals, forming groups and society. However, narcissism persists and

reorientates in ethnocentrism (group narcissism). Collective narcissism has psychological and social functions, creating an environment for the replacement of aggressive impulses. Collective narcissism allows the in-group to send aggressive impulses to out-groups, thereby eliminating or softening struggle inside the in-group. There is a relationship between the suppression of individual inclinations and the level of ethnocentrism. Since the discipline in the everyday life of the groups is related to restrictions, prohibitions, and requirements, it increases the aggressiveness of the group against other groups. The collective narcissism of the in-group creates dynamic tension, the desire to increase self-esteem and group benefits, provides individual societies or in-groups with the maximum sense of superiority, using what Freud called the narcissism [10].

Results. Basing on the indicated information, it can be stated that a clear understanding of the differences between cultures, and the formation of ethnocentrism also contributed to the formation of state borders during the Renaissance. By this time, the system of feudal loyalty was more important than national borders, and often lords on different parts of their property were in vassal relations with different rulers. To change this situation helped the establishment of absolute monarchies. Formed in several countries in Europe absolute monarchy destroyed class corporations implementing common national standards, making the entire population subjected to the ruler. Through the unification of public life and through the economic and cultural consolidation, national market was formed, single literary language and a single religion were implemented. As a result, the dominating principle was formed: every citizen was obliged to follow the religion of the ruler, which often led to violent religious assimilation, but that ultimately contributed to national unity. It was the time to form clear distinction between people and clearer differences between cultures. Formation of nations and adoption of certain standards, including cultural, led to fostering the unity and isolation from others [12].

Discussion. While ethnocentrism often becomes an obstacle to inter-group interaction, it also serves as a support for a positive identity and even the integrity and specificity [2]. It means that ethnocentrism, as a socio-psychological phenomenon of everyday consciousness, is a mechanism for strengthening the positive identity of ethnic groups and the preservation of its social and cultural identity. This phenomenon is manifested in the social perception of the ethnic group as a positive image of the in-group and the associated negative image of the relevant ethnic out-group. Ethnocentrism is a necessary condition for the emergence of ethnic identity, strengthening its cultural traits. The political component of ethnocentrism creates the focus on the priority of public interest. It is

generally stimulated and operated by ideological and political structures resulting in fast and effective national mobilization and consolidation. It performs a special role in the struggle to preserve national identity of the people. The manifestation of ethnocentrism is caused by cultural universals inherent in every nation; it is also caused by a need to prevent changes in own culture while mixing with other cultures. Consequently, ethnocentrism promotes cultural identity and ethnic consciousness of people. Cultural identity, at the same time, promotes cultural awareness of belonging to a specific ethnic group, forms cognitive and emotional self-identification. Accordingly, a significant advantage of ethnocentrism appears in the preservation of ethnic identity and cultural heritage protection [2]. More specific connections are presented in figure 1.

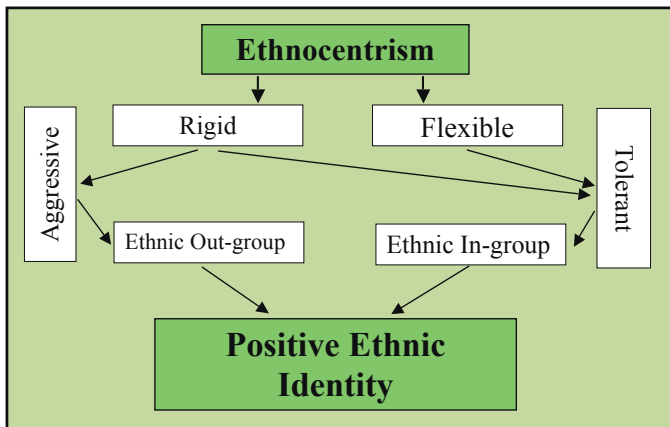


Fig. 1 Connection Between Ethnocentrism and Ethnic Identity

Indicated scheme states that to prevent destructive detection of ethnocentrism, flexibility in relationships with other people and their culture should be fulfilled. Some research works suggest the ways to achieve such flexibility. First, it is important to understand how the culture treats (filters) reality. Second, we must understand that all people have a variety of filters that cause their distortion and displacement of reality. Thirdly, people need to learn to assess emotions, opinions about morality, about the identity associated with their own ethnocentrism. Accordingly, own ethnocentrism can to some extent be managed by correcting some settings, principles and own values. The system of social relations of society, objective nature of interethnic relations significant influence the level of expression of ethnocentrism. In the presence of unfavorable social conditions ethnocentrism can be detected in hypertrophied form and become dysfunctional for the individual and

the group. Ethnocentrism can be a mechanism of social and psychological protection of ethnic, cultural identity in terms intercultural impact [9]. It often happens that culture affects other culture, inhibiting it with superior features and in such situation, ethnocentrism is expressed as the mechanism of socio-psychological protection. As a result, ethnocentrism is changing the so-called “we-image” in the mind of the group, maintains independence and integrity of the social and cultural subjects [2]. It is needed to remember that ethnocentrism is a deep cultural phenomenon that can become a mechanism of influence on relations between cultures and thus be used for political and economic purposes. Therefore, regulation of relations between ethnic groups by developing flexible ethnocentrism is essential for peace on Earth.

The analysis of scientific literature allows defining ethnocentrism as a tendency to view and evaluate external environment from the position of the norms and values, models of life of the personal ethnic group. Without the positive evaluation of own culture, there would be a reason to follow the rules of behavior and laws of society. Ethnocentrism can also be viewed as a psychological defense mechanism and a way to preserve identity, customs, and traditions, shapes national consciousness. It promotes ethnocultural identity and becomes a form of social control. It helps to unite society and culture, providing psychological comfort. Ethnocentrism is the state of ethnic consciousness that can manifest itself in a constructive and destructive form. This adaptive mechanism of existence that is most acutely manifested in the presence of external threats, and might cause negative consequences. Ethnocentrism promotes the development of ethnic communities around their own values and influences the formation of ethnic identity. Therefore, it is an important issue to find the ways to use ethnocentrism in a constructive form.

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The psychological state of society is one of the most important factors in its life. Ethnocentrism can be presented as a socio-psychological mechanism, aimed at preserving positive ethnocultural identity in terms of destruction of social and cultural independence and integrity of the group. The phenomenon of ethnocentrism is manifested in the form of a positive image of the ingroup and the associated negative image of the relevant another ethnic outgroup. The article investigates the problem of the relationship of social and psychological characteristics of people with ethnocentrism, describes socio-psychological features of ethnocentrism. Specific attention is paid to its genesis, types of ethnocentrism and the core mechanisms of its existence. Constructive and destructive aspects of the operation are presented as well, together with the active role of ethnocentrism in strengthening ethnic consciousness and ethnocultural identity. It was found out that ethnocentrism shows mostly positive effect on the maintenance of positive ethnic identity. It also should be noted that this feature is common almost for any society regardless of any local specifics. It is applicable to the implementation of cultural syndromes as measures of culture. The results have shown that ethnocentrism as a form of group-identification is very strong in terms of the in-group identity. That is why it has almost direct impact on the formation and maintenance of positive identity of any kind.
