



## **Problems of Ethno-social Representation in Media: Review of Theoretical Approach in XX-XXI Century**

**Iuliia Sokratovna Danilova<sup>1\*</sup>, Anatoli Stepanovich Puiy<sup>2</sup>, Sergey Borisovich Nikonov<sup>3</sup>, Ruslan Viktorovich Bekurov<sup>4</sup>, Anna Alexandrovna Litvinenko<sup>5</sup>**

<sup>1</sup>Saint-Petersburg State University, Universitetskaya naberejnaya 7/9, 199034, St-Petersburg, Russia, <sup>2</sup>Saint-Petersburg State University, Universitetskaya naberejnaya 7/9, 199034, St-Petersburg, Russia, <sup>3</sup>Saint-Petersburg State University, Universitetskaya naberejnaya 7/9, 199034, St-Petersburg, Russia, <sup>4</sup>Saint-Petersburg State University, Universitetskaya naberejnaya 7/9, 199034, St-Petersburg, Russia, <sup>5</sup>Saint-Petersburg State University, Universitetskaya naberejnaya 7/9, 199034, St-Petersburg, Russia.  
\*Email: [yulya.danilova@gmail.com](mailto:yulya.danilova@gmail.com)

### **ABSTRACT**

Several theories and researches of social science and liberal arts have been analyzed to define their place in defining specifics of cross-cultural communication. Classification of theories and comparison of research results allow making conclusions about correlation between media and social and political institutions. Today researches of ethnic-social relations in Internet may be separated into several groups by some principles. First one is researches that study ethnic nature and ethnic-social relations via texts, and works based on the study of ethnic affiliation via metadata. The second one is between research of ethnic character on the base of study of text and representation of users. Works covering the process of forming "cyberidentity" (including ethnic) should be separated from research where discourse ethnic character is considered "equal to itself" ("Russian" in Internet is equal to "Russian" beyond the net).

**Keywords:** Cross-Cultural Communication, Cyberidentity, Inter-Ethnic Conflicts, Policy of Cultural Diversity

**JEL Classifications:** Z13, Z18, O32, O33

### **1. INTRODUCTION**

The deepening of existing social gaps and originating of new gaps that did not exist before on new basis followed by growing macro-regional migration streams may be defined as causes of wide transformation of social reality. Recent events in Europe (mass protests against migrants in Germany, Italy, Switzerland and other countries, *Charlie Hebdo* shooting, growth of popularity of ultras and nationalist and anti-immigrant parties getting into the parliaments of some Mediterranean and Scandinavian countries, public discussions about building of masjids, wearing of felts, etc.) and the USA (ongoing civil disorders in Ferguson, growth of racist speeches in the "Tea Party Movement") has shown that in spite of diversity of causes of ethno-social gaps most of these conflicts that have already turned to an open phase have similar dynamics. It is characterized by the growth of inter-ethnic/interracial contradictions,

local intergroup conflict, relatively wide social protest with groups of active proponents and people protesting in streets, wide (international) public response with excogitation of local conflict as inter-civilizational, interracial or ethnic and confessional.

Such trends as sharpening of mass protests, manifestation of "direct democracy," growth of influence of media on origination and manifestation of new social gaps, reflection of sociality in general in media in recent years draw attention in the context of social and cultural transformation of society.

### **2. METHODS**

Starting from the 1970s researches of identity problems, cross-cultural communication covers all dimensions of liberal arts. A multidisciplinary approach to studying of these problems has

been forming. Communication science and media research play a significant role in it. According to multidisciplinary approach to research of similar problem, these are two theoretical approaches to analysis. The first one is the analysis of the role of media in identity forming. It is aimed on answering the question how media communication in post-modern era effect development of collective identity and cultural self-determination of personality. On the other hand researchers focus on representation of identities in media, in Internet that is capable to form the other ethno-social landscape. Shifts that go on in society are in this or that way related to the place and the role of media, to distribution of media, changing of functions and characteristics.

Comparative approach, structural and functional analysis, elements of statistical analysis were applied in the study. Content analysis, structural and semantic and stylistic analysis, classification, method of induction and deduction were used at the stage of collection and processing of empirical material.

### 3. RESULTS

The turn of the XX century was the period of wide research of social changes in society and development of various schools of thought and directions of research. Robert Ezra Parks should be mentioned among outstanding scientists of that period. He is worth noting not only as sociologist and researcher of different dimensions of communication but mainly as one of the first scientists who paid serious attention to problems of minorities and the press of those. According to social and ecological theory of Parks, society is characterized by two mutually exclusive concepts - control and agreement and social changes are related to changes of ethnic norms, individual attitudes, human nature in general. Park tried to show the influence of press on society, social attitudes and behavior of people (Park, 1922). According to Park, immigrant press plays a special role as a source of national identity. It is the most effective component of manipulation with collective consciousness. He also made interesting conclusions about the features of separate character of immigrant organizations and the role of those both in immigrant community and development of all national society in general. He came to conclusion that separate character of minorities does not prevent assimilation of those but to the contrary helps their natural adaptation. According to Park the fact that an immigrant cannot be recognized on personality level forces him to fight for recognition as representative of a certain nationality. So, separate character and nationalism of immigrant organizations and the press of those help first to adapt the whole group and then its individual representative. According to Park the process of such adaptation is struggle for existence of different languages and cultures. "It is the struggle of culturally isolated people for preservation of their cultural heritage and at the same time attempts to get access to all-European and global (cosmopolitan) culture be means the language they know best of all (native language)" (Park, 1922). Press is the most important weapon in this fight and communication being integrative and socializing process makes possible incremental and aligned functioning.

Concepts proposed by representatives of Frankfurt School Theodor Adorno and Max Horkheimer also made a great impact

on cross-cultural communication. They are mainly based in critic of developing mass culture as well as on statements about its anti-democratic character. Mass media has unlimited power and are characterized by "constant temptation of con game appealing to dreams and hopes" (Adorno and Horkheimer, 1944). Adorno and Horkheimer also developed Karl Marx's idea of economic and social domination. Mass media according to Adorno and Horkheimer is an instrument of accretion of power and public opinion and are blurring the boundaries between private and public. Mass media has targeted influence on perception and attitude of the audience. This phenomenon is proved by the fact that mass media has direct impact on an individual person without engaging other individuals in this field of interaction. So it is impossible to limit the impact of mass media.

The problem of forming stereotypes by mass media is one of the main problem of inter-ethnic and inter-confessional conflicts. According to Adorno and Horkheimer development of stereotypes that is frequent phenomenon of mass media leads to reduction of complexity of perception of the world and to "promising sameness" (Adorno and Horkheimer 1944). Representatives of this school criticize TV that implants the model of white man in cultural space promoting the idea of real economic superiority of this group over the other minorities. Activity of most mass media results in infinitely passive model of self-identification of a person. Uncontrolled activity of media and its limitless impact on the audience together with forming of false idea of the world as a flat system with simplifies stereotyping of main concepts and phenomena lead to serious consequences, such as fascism, wars and national and racial conflicts that occurred during the last century.

Ideas of Paul Lazarsfeld and his theory of limited effect of mass media may be opposed to these theories. Group of American scientists lead by Lazarsfeld in the middle of XX century stated that mass media is capable only of limited effect on developed opinion of a person (Berelson et al., 1948). Leaders of opinions and communications play an important role on inter-personal level and they are capable to make significant effect on opinion of audience. This theory was further developed by Schramm and William Katz and became known as "multilevel communication model." New links in communication chain cause rethinking of functions and tasks of media.

The concepts of "agenda" and "the spiral of silence" are important aspects of the problem of representation of cultural and ethno-confessional characteristics by mass media. According to Jules Maigret, agenda is "an instrument for identification and comparison of opinion of media and opinion of audience and eventually reaching agreement between them" (Maigret, 2003). One may also say that it is a sort of hierarchy of priorities, the list of tasks for a certain type of media for all media system as a whole. They are classified by their value and importance. Main specific features of agenda are regularity, repetitive character, urgency. Media now "serves as a mediator that highlight problems that arose public discussions" (Mattelart, 1995). Respectively, press rather promote ideas to think about than dictate the way of thinking. So, agenda creates events that may arose positive, negative and

indifferent public reaction (Maigret, 2003). It becomes obvious that mass media forms the worldview and often make it in accordance with politic orientation of editorial board. Modern research carried out by French scientists Berthaut, Darras, Laurens proves this principle of agenda. They have studied regional titles in France in respect of pluralistic character of publications and came to conclusion of stigmatization and stonewall many topics. It may be explained first of all by economic interests of this or that edition. Market dictates a certain number of topics of publications, that means that “information that may be easily sold has greater priority for a title” (Berthaut et al., 2009). So principle of agenda may be really important and effective for the achievement of a certain aims and objectives. While formerly agenda corresponded to ideological orientation of a title, now it serves economic benefits of this or that type of media.

The concept of the spiral of silence that was proposed in the middle of the XX century became popular and got weight among theories that explain patterns of development of inter-personal relations and communication. Basing on this concept Elisabeth Noelle-Neumann proposes an idea that fear of social isolation, the principle of information deficit in society cause stonewall information, points of view that contradict with opinion of majority (Noelle-Neumann, 1984). As a result the picture of flat world forms both in media and in public conscience. It may be proved firstly by the fact that individual has sharp need of presence in social environment and achieve it by media. Secondly with limited number of contacts with other people different minorities became more dependent of information sources and media. Due to publication of the spiral of silence researchers, journalists and many intellectuals of that time saw the necessity to stop ignoring opinion of minorities.

New challenges appearing by the course of history such as different liberation movements, fight for minority rights, liberalism lead to rethinking of the role and functions of mass media and mass communication in today society. While XX century was the century of information and communication supremacy as the mean of manipulation, XXI century, according to Dominique Wolton, should propose new model - communication as a “mean of coexistence.” Information now demonstrates the new political challenge of “coexistence of cultures” (Wolton, 2009). What are the specific features of this challenge, what are its reasons and possible consequences? The works of French scientist, founder of the institution Centre national de la recherche scientifique, CNRS Dominique Wolton may give an answer on these questions. Basing on the realms of today society, Wolton became sure that is necessary to shift from simple stating the fact of cultural diversity to political building foundations of coexistence of different cultures. According to the researcher, this work should be based on media, on core change of attitude to information of both sides: That produce and consume it.

Cultural component of communication is the most complicated of three components of communication - economic, technical and cultural and it require attention and careful approach. Tolerance is now one of structural terms of communication “and what is more the idea of the necessity to achieve agreements is integral

part of democratic culture” (Wolton, 2006). What is the reason of inherent changes both in public conscious and in communication itself? First of all it is related to surfeit of information sources and information itself. Logical phenomenon may be seen: The more there is information, information flows the greater is manifestation of cultural, political and social diversity. On the other hand it opens the possibility of ghettoization of cultures by means of Internet, spreading social networks. Such rethinking of the nature of social links in today society with prevailing interactive character of relations between people and interactivity in turn is “substitution of difficulties in inter-personal communication” (Wolton, 2006). One more important change is forming the new image of information recipient and reader that is fully competent actor of the process of communication. The fact of cultural diversity makes attention to consumer one of the most important conditions of today media development.

Wolton advocates the anthropologic concept of communication. “Dialogue of cultures,” recognizance of the diversity of cultures, equality and respect to any culture is typical for this concept. In his last work “Information does not mean communication” he provides arguments to his statement. “The problem of alien also arises in communication. It is extremely complicated both on the level of individual and collective experience despite ubiquitous character of information technologies, their high efficiency and freedom of individuals” (Wolton, 2009). Wolton speaks also about the disruption of communication “Yesterday the horizon of norms was limited to establishing communication and today we speak about rejections in establishing communication by reaching agreements to create conditions that allow people living together close to each other” (Wolton, 2009).

Change of communication type causes transformation of journalism itself. French Miège analyses phenomenon of “intermediatization” as an evidence of the shift from information society to the society of communication. This phenomenon presupposes “growth of areas of personal and collective mediatization” (Miège, 2000) and necessary communicative tools that does not presupposes journalist as main actor. It manifests itself most vividly in forming of civil journalism where audience and consumers of media content may act as journalist. At the same time the Professor of the Institute of French Press (Institut français de Presse, IFP) Rieffel notes that ongoing evolution of journalism may be interpreted as gradual growth of requests of consumers of media content but also on rejection of objective character, generalization of the culture of promotion and on the form of aestheticization of information (Rieffel, 2005).

The value of the journalism of information was objective character and indifference. It is now being replaced by the journalism of communication that is focused on the contact with consumer. According to Canadian researchers of media journalism of communication rejects objectivity as Eutopia but acknowledge accuracy and authenticity as attractive factors of media functioning. Still it is focused on inter-subjective relations with reader (Charron et al., 2004). In their works they provide a number of evidences of transformation of functions and the role of journalism in today world. Among main factors of mutation they separate economical

factor and express the opinion that it is necessary for journalism to appeal to audience not only as consumers but citizens. To oppose growth of financial factors on the content of information flows and change of orientation of most editorials to following market demand of society it is necessary to be committed to traditions of social and civil responsibility of journalists in society and thus stress the value of journalism in forming public opinion. Journalist and the Professor of the School of Journalism in Lille Martin – Lagardette who shares ideas of «liberal» and «civil» press speaks about thematic and specialized magazines. The role of such journals is mainly informing and addressing not citizen but consumer. According to Martin - Lagardette, “knowledge and information are being adapted not for the forming opinion of the audience about a certain social phenomenon but mainly for entertaining, attracting attention and matching requests of consumers” (Martin-Lagardette, 2006).

Attitude to minorities is changing in media space last years. It is characterized by the growth of positive images of representatives of minorities. In some part it is related to acknowledgement of the extent of importance of reflecting of social and cultural reality and in part with political manipulations. The process of “ethnization” goes on political level. It is explained by the possibility to attract voters by appealing to problems of multinational population.

#### 4. DISCUSSION

Changes that touch inter-personal and inter-cultural communication have led to the transformation of the basics of interaction of media and society.

Several studies of this problem that were made earlier should be considered in analysis of place and the role of journalism in forming cultural worldview. Most authors consider the gap between multicultural reality of social organization and representation in media the main specific feature of situation. According to research made by Van Dijk who analyzed coverage of ethnic problems in media of different European countries supremacy of the majority and marginalization of minorities are fixing in positions of media. Minorities are represented in dual manner that is based on stereotypes and narrow-mindedness. One aspect is problems (crimes, poverty, etc.), another is folklore (traditions, cuisine, music) (Van Dijk, 2002). Research of Canadian scientists Tremblay, Potvin, Kutur of racist discourse in printed media allowed to reveal that sometimes the state of “moral panic” is being created when some episodes of violence are covers as deep social crisis stressing deviant behavior of some groups of minorities and as a result these groups are being stigmatized in media and society for prevention of such crisis (Henry and Tator, 2000).

As we can see, media has serious impact on image and identification of minorities in society and as a result dual role of media is being formed. On one hand they promote minimal necessary social links between individuals and between state and society. But on the other hand this role of mediator is decreasing today replaced by the own autonomous role of journalism that is affecting events.

The following group of functions may be considered interesting in the context of relation of press and the institution of national policy:

- Regulatory - management, self-administration, public control (forming of public opinion and functioning as a social institution);
- Cultural - spiritual and ideological functions;
- Integrative - definition and mainstreaming common national idea;
- Relational - reflection, generalization, recommendation, impact (Blokhin, 2008).

These are indicators of deep dependencies of social, political and national institutions. The function of social integration that is the most important in the world of constant social, ethnic or religious opposition in all layers of cross-cultural society is added to traditional functions of journalism.

In the context of development of ethnic journalism Russian researchers Kirichek and Potapov analyses the participation of journalists in so called “greening of culture” and advocate “preservation of originality of tradition forms of national culture as well as adaptation of those to new transitional conditions of social development” (Kirichek and Potapov, 2005). They define several stages of forming of culture with the help of mass media:

- Activation of ethnic and cultural space that is the shift of the process of national development from static (evolutionary) state to dynamic (revolutionary) state that means extremal “maximization” of all its factors - social, political, economic, spiritual, reduced to ethnic-cultural substrate;
- Curing of ethnic and cultural space that is refreshing of national development (rebirth) from different deviant manifestations in conscious and behavior of people in group and inter-personal levels that are caused by problems of social status ethnic communities and derived state (parity, dominance, subordination) of national cultures in a region;
- Harmonization of ethnic-cultural space that is realized in the process of reaching of the state of agreement or aliment of inter-ethnic relations in a region in accordance with civilizational models of ethnic identity and ethnic stratification that have been developed on the base of human values and forming national and cultural policy derived from these models with leading principle of national partnership (Kirichek and Potapov, 2005).

From the semiotic point of view the concept of intertext should be considered in analysis of inter-cultural communication. This concept was first formulated by Barthes. “Each text is intertext; other texts are present is it in different levels in more or less recognizable forms: Texts of preceding culture and texts of existing culture (Barthes, 1974). But the term was introduced by Kristeva and it is often used for context analysis of press. Post-structural approach presupposes opposition of “self” and “alien” in text that was known before but not of direct meaning of using certain quotations and sources but as a representation of the way of thinking, traditions, functional and stylistic code, etc. What concerns mass media, intertext character consists of two components. Firstly, it is dialog character of a journalist

with everybody whose opinion and information he uses and their impact - direct or indirect - on art product. Secondly, a journalist should set priorities and define hierarchy in information presentation in accordance with his own attitude, editorial policy, expectations of the audience (Potvin, 2008). In this case a journalist is in “deep structure” connection with other types of discourse that allow him to select and interpret information in correct way. According to British sociologist Hall deep structure of some discourse is connection of elements, principles, speculations developed and matured in a time that accumulate existing knowledge and skills and forming a sort of a basin of topics and information that help a journalist to present information to public (Hall, 2013). So intertext character is important element of today text that requires careful approach in selection of semantic and lexical components.

Social turbulences related to racism are manifested in Internet also. Old form of racism enters online space and transforms into social sentiments and movements in real world. Mobile phones and social networks are used for consolidation and organization of protests (Litvinenko, 2012). “Blurring the borders” and shift to online face individual before the problem of self-identification and prove the idea of constant fight between the world making global and personality (Castells, 1997). Although many theorists forecasted elimination of borders due to Internet and online communication fragmentation and “ghettoization” are in place and the level of racism is not lowering but become higher. One may see today that sites of many newspapers, TV-channels close comments to prevent invectives, racial adherence and ethnic intolerance. One should keep in mind that Internet discussion has more degree of freedom than off-line, has non-linear nature and go on inside “virtual diaspora” with borders that differ from real ones (Castells, 1997).

Recent studies of ethnic-social relations in Internet may be separated into several groups by some principles. The first one studies ethnic nature and ethnic-social relations via texts, and works based on the study of ethnic affiliation via metadata. The second one is between research of ethnic character based on text studies and representation of users. Works covering the process of forming “cyber identity” (including the ethnical aspect) should be separated from research where discourse ethnic character is considered “equal to itself” (“Russian” in Internet is equal to “Russian” beyond the net). In first case research covers the way the basics of ethnic identification in Internet changes; these researches linked cyber identity with other features of online representation - downsizing of a subject, increased freedom of image constructing, discrete character of presentation, etc. The turn of XXI century and first half of 2000s was the time of peal popularity of this approach when scientific community thought of Internet as a new space of communication. Scientists of the world have no definite answer on this question because parallel character of off-line and online political discussion has not yet been studied. Still one may note that unlike the “period of democratic optimism” of beginning of 2000s, researchers state today that principles of discussion of ethnic-social problems in the Net are closer of off-line ones as it was thought before. Even in his early works Nakamura noted that negative attitude to ethnic out-groups

may be even greater in Internet (Nakamura, 2002); today Daniels in “New Media and Society” states that interracial and inter-ethnic relations are represented online with great probability (Daniels, 2013). According to these opinions one may consider that Net discussion in general may reflect the state of social dialog on ethnic-social problem.

## 5. CONCLUSION

The so-called “post-Charlie” journalism requires new analysis from the point of view of impact of cross-cultural communication on activity of journalists, on social and cultural context considering specifics of online communication and today geo-political characteristics (Nikonov, 2013; Potolokova and Kurysheva, 2013). On one hand certain norms and standards of inter-ethnic communication that have been developing during XX century are not completely relevant to realms of social dialog due to changes of behavior and social and cultural context. On the other hand forming of global information space and «cyber identity» leads to strengthening of racial and cultural confrontation. Besides these micro-explosions are catalyst of political mobilization that goes far beyond the conflict itself both in territorial and in discursive sense; citizens that were politically indifferent in other cases are involved in protest and in discussion. Study of consequences of radicalization in this or that side of discourse of inter-ethnic communication in public area, ways of regulation of attempts of racial discrimination in Internet will help to explain the polarization of public opinion, deepening of social gaps. The most interesting is study of ethnic-social discourse in Internet, development of tools for quality analysis of agenda move from online to off-line, intensification of social and political protests.

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