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Students' Attitudes Towards Migrants as a Factor and an Indicator of Ethnic and Religious Attitudes of Today's Youth

The first part of the article reveals the concept of social attitudes and social stereotypes, which are described in the context of ethnic relations. This paper focuses on the role of the media in shaping the worldview of today's youth. The second part of the article describes the study of social distance and ethnic and religious stereotypes conducted by I.V. Abakumova and A.V. Grishina. The last part of the article is devoted to the main findings and conclusions of the study.

Key words: social attitude, social stereotype, ethnic and religious attitudes, social distance.

Attitudes of the mass consciousness and social stereotypes entered the life of modern man so well that it is often difficult to determine exactly what guides our behavior in a particular social situation: a subjective opinion, an objective knowledge or imposed from the outside attitude and stereotypes.

The concept of "attitude" was introduced into the Russian psychological science by the representative of the Georgian psychology school D.N. Uznadze. Attitude was understood as "prior to any mental or behavioral human acts willingness to commit adequate in the given situation." Most attitudes person gets out of subjective experience and culture, and in today's society attitudes in finished form are broadcast in the media, allowing a person not to form their own attitudes to various objects, processes and phenomena and thus greatly simplifying the interaction in society, whose members have the same mass consciousness attitudes.

There are the following basic attitude functions: cognitive, affective and behavioral. To differentiate these functions let's describe the "Lapierre paradox". In 1934, the American psychologist R. Laper travelled through a considerable number of small American towns, accompanied by two Chinese students. They stayed in hotels, visiting restaurants and cafes, and, with one exception, were taken quite normal. After the completion of the travel Lapierre sent a letter to hotels and restaurants owners asking if they are ready to meet him with a group of friends, among whom will be Chinese. 93 % said "no". Lapierre data were later confirmed by other researchers. This example shows that the estimated attitude to members of a particular ethnic group in a situation requiring a behavioral response was



ousted by behavioral attitudes of hotelier or restaurant to the client. [5] Thus, on the one hand the actual social distance between interaction subjects is in conflict with the estimated ethnic attitudes of one of the subjects, which in this setting turns out to be more stable than the previous subjective experience of interaction with other ethnic groups. On the other hand, in real interaction, rather than mediated, between members of different ethnic groups ethnic and religious attitudes can be changed even to completely the opposite.

Social attitudes are not stable and can be transformed under the influence of external and internal factors. Thus, ethnic and religious settings are transformed most often under the influence of subjective interaction experience with other ethnic groups, or under the influence of the media. In the cognitivist approach, changing social attitudes is treated as part of the "theories of conformity" (F. Hayder, T. Nyukom, L. Festinger, Ch. Osgud, P. Tannenbaum, G.M. Andreeva). This means that attitude changes occur every time when a mismatch happens in individual's cognitive structure, for example, when a negative attitude to an object faces a positive attitude to a person giving this object a positive description. Mismatches can occur for various other reasons. It is important that the incentive to change the attitude is a need of the individual to recover the cognitive matching, i.e. orderly, "unequivocal" perception of the external world. [5] For example, if a public figure or politician referent for the majority of media consumers expresses his opinion about how Russia is in need of migrant workers, the ethnic and religious attitudes of the audience can transform.

The concept of social attitude closely borders the concept of a social stereotype, understood as a simplified schematic image of the social object (for example, the image of a social group), widespread in certain large social group, which is characterized by a high consistency degree of the individual submission and emotional overtones in the group.

N.N. Bogomolova identifies certain characteristics of large social groups stereotypes:

- schematic and simplistic image of the social object;
- the prevalence of certain stereotypes in the group, usually on a level of 60–80 %;
- emotional and evaluative nature of stereotypes;
- stability and sustainability of stereotypes, their rigidity to new information about the object;
- inaccurate stereotypes [2].

Social stereotypes researchers agree on their useful socio-psychological functions, believing that the presence of stereotypes allows individual to organize and simplify the plethora of complex information that a person receives from the environment, but also protects and preserves the individual sense-value sphere.

N.N. Bogomolova also notes another function of social stereotyping- intergroup differentiation in the process of intergroup perception. Such an estimated



comparison of the social groups (their own or someone else's) can take many forms: the opposition, which implies a maximum preference of the group and at least a bias against other groups, or comparing, which Porshnev defined as «a form of peaceful identity». The nature of the relations between social groups influences the maintenance of social stereotypes and their orientation [2].

The most common form of social stereotypes are ethnic stereotypes. First psychological work in the study of ethnic stereotypes were published in the mid 30s of XX century by O. Klaynberg and J. Buck as part of their «frustration and aggression hypothesis.» However, the greatest impact on the ethnic stereotypes understanding was made by T. Adorno in his works «Authoritarian personality» and «On the nature of prejudice», where it was shown that individuals of the same ethnic group have significant differences in the degree of exposure to ethnic stereotyping. T. Adorno described the type of person most prone to the absorption and diffusion of ethnic prejudice, and called this type an «authoritarian personality». The authoritarian personality, according to Adorno, is characterized by rigid thinking, conformity to accepted values, intolerance towards any manifestation of weakness and empathy, a tendency to repression, expressed suspicion, worship authority [2].

T. Pettigryu believed that the basis for the social stereotypes formation in general and ethnic stereotypes in particular, is conformism as unconditional surrender to the prevailing social norms.

The problem of ethnic stereotypes was developed in russian psychology by I.S. Kon, B.A. Dushkov, V.P. Levkovich, N.G. Pankova, A.G. Asmolov, E.I. Shlyagina, V.F. Petrenko, G.U. Soldatova. Within psychosemantic approach V.F.Petrenko conducted research on ethnic auto-and hetero-stereotypes of Russian students, perceptions and attitudes of different social groups of Russian citizens to foreign countries and different nationalities, showing that the young audience perception of the typical representatives of various nationalities (including their own) predominates psychological group differentiation mechanism is not in the form of contrast, but in the form of comparison groups that leads to the creation of complementary images. In this case, none of the qualities not only repeated, but they all belong to different bipolar oppositions.

In today's information society the process of mutual perception of large social groups moves to a new level, as one of the main mediators in the contacts between two groups are media now. And for some social groups, such as young people, by virtue of unformed mechanisms to counter the influence of the media, on the one hand, and the lack of subjective experience of interaction with other social groups members, on the other hand, media broadcasts attitudes and stereotypes of mass consciousness, especially ethnic and religious, as a finished product [4].

To identify the characteristics of migrant workers image in Russian media for further study the characteristics of the image perception of students of dif-



ferent professional direction, we analyzed the various TV and radio programs, articles in press and Internet about migrant workers, published in the period from March 2009 to March 2012. It has been shown that in Russian media national minorities image is at ridiculous stage when the dominant social group exalts its own image through detraction of minorities image. The terms «guest workers» and «illegals» are used in all types of media with a pronounced negative shade more often than the rest of the phrase by giving the audience a persistent negative attitude to all migrants, regardless of their actual professional affiliation, skill level, etc. Images of migrants emphasize their incompetence, ignorance, lack of education and absolute disintegration in the host society. At the same time negatively stained information about migrants is often linked in the media with certain ethnic groups forming ethnic stereotypes and prejudices among the audience.

In order to assess respondents' attitudes towards the media broadcasted images of migrant workers and, more importantly, determine the social distance at which the respondent admits the images and the migrants themselves appropriately, we have modified «The scale of social distance» by E. Bogardus. The concept of social distance was introduced by the sociologist Georg Simmel as an indicator of the social groups and individuals position in the social space, their ratio, i. e. the level of their proximity or remoteness of alienation from each other, their degree of interconnectedness.

The experimental basis of the study were state universities of Rostov-on-Don: SFEDU «Southern Federal University,» and the State Educational Institution «Rostov State University of Railway Transport». A total of 200 participants: 147 women and 53 men. The study process was carried out by the horizontal dimension and had the character of group and individual work. All study participants were asked to fill out forms uniform testing and questioning.

The subjects were asked to rate 11 frames-images taken from the media and mark the distance to which they would willingly have put the members of the group (from «The close relationship, a marriage» to «Do not have to indulge in my country») (See picture 1).

As a result of our research social distance was defined not with different ethnic groups, but with the images of these groups broadcast in the media in covering issues of labor migration.

Images of athletes and coaches, depicted in pictures 9 and 11, in all respondent groups were placed to the lowest social distance, which implies a close relationship through marriage or friendship. Images of teachers, researchers, governesses, shown in pictures 3, 4, 5, were put to the average social distance, which implies membership in my professional group or neighborhood. The biggest social distance in all groups was identified with the images shown in pictures 6 and 7. The distance with the image of not working migrants from neighboring countries (picture) was the biggest, and respondents from all professional groups



believe that such migrant workers should not receive permission to enter Russian Federation.



Fig. 1. Stimulus material to the method of "Social distance scale" (modified by I.V. Abakumova, A.V. Grishina)

In the group of economists the smallest social distance with all the images (except for image 6) has been identified, indicating the economics students greater loyalty and tolerance to labor migrants. In a group of lawyers, on the contrary, the greatest social distance with all images was found, which indicates a generally negative attitude of law students to labor migrants.

For a more complete picture of the migrant workers image and the general attitude of students to labor migration they were offered uniform questionnaire. All students participated in the study voluntarily. Completion of all phases of the study took about 2 academic hours. Mathematical treatment of the data included standard methods of mathematical statistics.

The first questionnaire contained questions about the students' attitude to labor migration as a social phenomenon. There are the following significant results:

- Russia does not need migrant workers;
- labor migrants "take away" local citizens working places;
- wage of migrant workers and members of the local population, occupying the same job, should be the same;
- employers invite migrant workers as "cheap labor force";
- according to physics students, Russia needs qualified specialists from abroad.



The second questionnaire was directed to the study of students' attitudes to the media role in forming the migrants image. It gave the following results:

- media portray migrants negatively;
- the most popular image of a migrant worker in media are the characters of «Our Russia» TV-programm;
- attitude to migrants is not formed by media;
- the greatest impact on the migrant worker image formation has a TV;
- discussion of labor migration in the media leads to intolerance, on the one hand, and attracts the attention and interest to this problem, on the other hand;
- the most commonly used terms in the discussion of labor migration are “illegal” and “guest worker”.

This study allows us to draw a number of conclusions. Under the influence of stereotypes broadcast in media, the youth formed a sustainable images, which give rise to the transformation of negative expectations systems in relation to different social groups. The images created for migrants emphasize their incompetence, ignorance, lack of education and absolute disintegration in the host society. At the same time negatively stained information of migrants is often linked in the media with certain ethnic groups, forming audience ethnic and religious stereotypes and attitudes. The image of a migrant worker in the perception of students is significantly deformed. Regardless of the students professional orientation in all the groups there was identified a steady rejection of a particular migrant workers category (working specialties) on the one hand, and, on the other hand, unconditional acceptance of the other categories of migrants, which prior to the study subjects were not added to the category of “migrant workers” although these are (qualified experts in different areas). This trend is becoming social and psychological risk [1]. It is required to create a special approach to the selection and translation of an ethnic information in media in order to promote tolerance and to prevent such negative social phenomena xenophobia against immigrants.

In addition, it is necessary to organize aimed work with students in universities(both representatives of host population and migrants) to form and develop mutually tolerant attitudes, which is an important component of the anti-terroristic ideology system spread and anti-extremist values development among the young generation.

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