

Bondarevskaya I. Social identity and trust as factors of consolidated public opinion formation / I. Bondarevskaya // IAREP – SABE Joint Conference, Conference track 2: Money, Stress, Crisis and Happiness: Interdisciplinary perspective of Economics and Psychology (Sibiu, 3 – 6 September, 2015). – P. 53 – 57.

## **SOCIAL IDENTITY AND TRUST AS FACTORS OF CONSOLIDATED PUBLIC OPINION FORMATION**

*Irina Bondarevskaya*

*Institute of Social and Political Psychology NAPS of Ukraine*

Consideration of social identity and trust as factors of consolidated public opinion formation is due to mutual social processes connected with formation of social identity, trust and public opinion.

Social identity is seen as the basis for consolidated public opinion formation. According to Tajfel (1978), Tajfel & Turner (1979) social identity is a part of self-concept which arises on the basis of knowledge about membership in social group (or groups) together with emotional significance of this membership. Each social identity is formed as a result of group (ingroup) membership and opposition to other, outgroup. Processes of social comparison lie in the basis of social identity formation. People evaluate believes and abilities comparing themselves with others in the process of social interaction.

Ingroup is compared to similar or different outgroup, parameters of comparison are social categorizations which are stereotypical constructs as they determine borders of group membership (Festinger, 1954). People also need to define value of their group in comparison to another group by intergroup comparison. Motivation for such comparison lies in the need for positive social identity: the one which shows positive distinctive features of a person and ingroup according to significant characteristics.

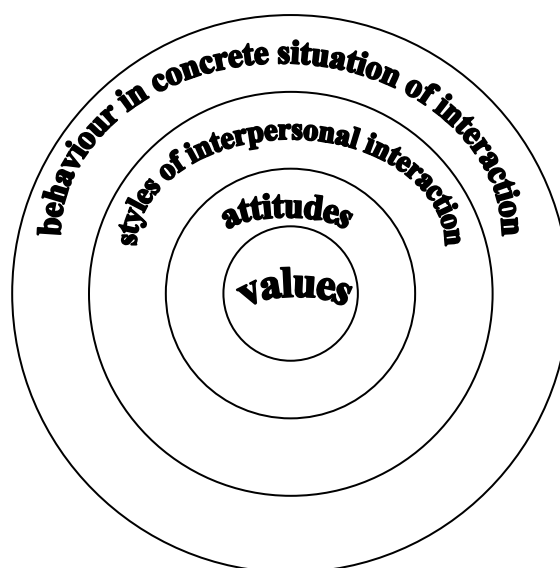
K.V. Korostelina (2003) determines values and attitudes as meaning content of social identity. An important factor which effects changes in the system of social identities lies in shifts of values priority and shift of aims.

System of values orientation is formed on the basis of individual experience, personal and professional roles. One system of values determines interaction with family and friends, second – professional behaviour (Rokeach, 1968). M. Rokeach (1968) distinguishes between terminal and instrumental values. Terminal values are long-term or final goals which an individual strives for. Instrumental values are goals determined by everyday experience, they are short-term.

According to M. Rokeach & G. Rothman (1965) there is hierarchy of believes, attitudes and values. Believes form attitudes. Attitude can be composed of many believes, plenty of attitudes merging form a value. Believes, attitudes and values are interconnected and exist in hierarchy as a single system of believes.

G. W. Allport (1935) determines attitude as a psychological state of readiness organized by experience. It effects individual's reactions on all objects and situations which he / she encounters.

K. V. Korostelina (2003) in her research showed interconnection between attitudes and social identity. Basic identities are connected with stable attitudes which effect personal life position, perception of ingroup and outgroup.



**Figure 1. Social identity model**

Theoretical model of social identity (Bondarevskaya, 2008) consists of meaning content, styles of interpersonal interaction in which it is revealed and behavior in concrete situation of interaction. Meaning content includes system of values and attitudes, while values lie in the center (the most stable component), attitudes (more apt to changes) lie in the layer next to the center. Third layer, styles of interpersonal interaction, is even more apt to changes than the previous ones. The outer layer, behaviour in concrete situation, is the most apt for changes, e.g. in the process of training programs.

All components of this theoretical model of social identity are inseparably connected with consolidated public opinion. Styles of interpersonal interaction and behaviour in concrete situation of interaction correspond with such characteristics of consolidated public opinion distinguished by P.D. Frolov (2014) as desire and readiness for communication, negotiation, orientation on rules for mutual position achievement, mutual perception, argumentation, conflict resolution, readiness of public opinion bearers to change it or on the contrary to influence others. Orientation on definite rules according to P.D. Frolov (2014) allows determining type and prospects for public opinion consolidation.

As for meaning content of social identity, values and attitudes of social group a person identifies himself / herself with determine what opinion this person reconstructs. Wherein the more salient is the social identity in the system of social identities of the person the more significant is the opinion of the group for the person.

Besides salience of social identity, actuality of social identity is very important for determination of opinion significance. Actuality is conditioned by situation, context of interaction. For example, ethnic identity can be not salient in the system of social identities of a person but in situation when a person finds himself / herself in a group where the majority of people belong to different ethnic group, especially when this situation is conflict, ethnic identity becomes actual. If such situations repeat, ethnic identity can become salient in the system of social

identities of a person. Respectively opinions which he / she assigns to own ethnic group will become important for him / her.

Striving for positive social comparison in favour of own ingroup (ingroup favoritism) stipulates tendency to evaluate more positively opinions ascribed to ingroup than opinions ascribed to outgroup. This phenomenon can be flattened by existence of more general overgroup values because values are more transcendental criteria for intergroup comparison than opinions.

According to social identity model mentioned above opinions are on the level of attitudes. Consolidated public opinion can be formed in case there are mutual values between groups and working out mutual generally accepted rules of interaction, and then differences between opinions can be minimized. Existence of mutual intergroup goals will be additional factor for decrease of ingroup favoritism.

Consolidated public opinion formation is impossible without a definite level of trust between members of ingroup and outgroup. P.D. Frolov (2014) mentions necessity to consider peculiarities of emotional component of relations between members of different communities for determination of public opinion consolidation level. First of all attention should be paid to trust level, empathy and mutual understanding between those who have different opinions. Absence of trust, negative emotional perception can demolish those values and meanings which used to unite society.

When representatives of different social groups having different opinions even in case of mutual values manifest incompatible styles of interpersonal interaction, rules of interaction which contradict those accepted in the other group then intensity of negative emotions lead to demolishing of trust and consequently to differences in understanding values which used to be mutual.

It is worth considering phenomenon of trust on the example of interethnic economic relations because ethnic identity is usually one of the basic social identities of a person while economic relations appear to be one of indicators of trust / distrust. Social and political changes are inevitably reflected on interethnic

economic relations. In turn interethnic tension cannot help effecting trust / distrust in the sphere of business.

It is important to distinguish the following levels of interethnic economic trust: interpersonal level, level of interaction inside organization, level of interaction between organizations, interregional level, and interstate level.

R.C. Mayer, J.H. Davis, F.D. Schoorman (1995) define trust as the willingness of a party to be vulnerable to the actions of another party based on the expectation that the other will perform a particular action important to the trustor, irrespective of the ability to monitor or control that party.

W.F. van Raaij (2012) draws attention to trust as a vital factor of economy. Trust in government and institutions are essential for transactions, without such trust more juridical precautions are required. As a consequence of distrust business processes slow down and transactions costs increase bringing negative economic effects.

L. Hagendoorn (2007) points out that “trust in government has a positive effect on outgroup stereotypes, acceptance of outgroup members and the willingness to help and trust individual outgroup members because the government represents interests of all citizens. By trusting the government citizens trust that the state will provide safety, social security and material opportunities to all ethnic groups”.

Connection between trust in government / authorities and economic behavior was vividly shown in a number of studies concerning tax behavior. E. Kirchler et al. described and proved empirically a “slippery slope framework” consisting of three dimensions: trust in tax authorities, power of tax authorities and tax compliance. Tax compliance is assumed to be influenced by trust and power of authorities (Kirchler, Hölzl, & Wahl, 2008; Wahl, Kastlunger, & Kirchler, 2010). In the later research tax compliance was shown to be connected with national/EU identity and perceived distributive fairness (Hartner-Tiefenthaler, Kubicek, Kirchler, Rechbrger, & Wenzel, 2012).

Cultural differences in trust are worth considering talking about trust to ingroup / outgroup members. Takahashi et al. (2008) and Yamagishi et al. (1998) distinguish between cultures with institutional basis for trust and interpersonal basis for trust. Institutional basis for trust is typical for societies with strong norms and sanctioning systems, interpersonal basis for trust is typical for societies with weak norms and sanctioning systems. Strong norms and sanctions in cultures with institutional basis of trust exclude necessity for development of interpersonal trust by providing a reliable external guarantor of behavior.

B. Lancee and J. Dronkers (2011) identify ethnic, economic, religious diversity and language proficiency in the neighborhood as factors affecting interethnic trust for immigrants and native residents. They consider that definite forms of diversity can undermine but also build various aspects of trust taking into account that diversity has different effects on immigrants and native residents.

In conclusion it is worth mentioning that trust partly based on mutual social identity is a necessary condition of consolidated public opinion formation. In turn consolidated public opinion increases trust in society because mutual opinions provide less risks in problem solving including economic problems. Indeed it is the case of mutual opinions which are productive and corresponding social norms.