

Journal of Geography, Politics and Society

2023, 13(1), 30–41

<https://doi.org/10.26881/jpgs.2023.1.04>



GEOGRAPHICAL AND MENTAL BOUNDARIES OF UKRAINIAN IDENTITY

Vadym Vasiutynskyi

Institute of Social and Political Psychology, National Academy of Educational Sciences of Ukraine, Andriivska 15, 04070 Kyiv, Ukraine, ORCID: 0000-0002-9808-4550
e-mail: vadmvas55@gmail.com

Citation

Vasiutynskyi V. 2023, Geographical and Mental Boundaries of Ukrainian Identity, *Journal of Geography, Politics and Society*, 13(1), 30–41.

Abstract

The purpose of the research is to establish correspondence between the geographical and mental boundaries of the Ukrainian ethno-political identity. A theoretical and comparative analysis and generalization of historical, geographical, political and sociological theses and data have been applied. The research determines the external boundaries (between Ukraine and the surrounding countries) and internal ones (between the regions of Ukraine). It demonstrates the exceptional importance of the Ukrainian identity opposition to the Russian mental influences. Ukraine is divided into three main regions. Central Ukraine is a mental basis for the Ukrainian identity and political nation. Western Ukraine is notable for the highest level of national consciousness and Ukrainian patriotism. South-Eastern Ukraine is characterized by stronger competition of the Ukrainian and Russian values, but simultaneously by dominating Ukrainian identity.

Key words

mental boundaries, Ukrainian identity, ethnic identity, political identity, ethno-political identity, regional identity.

Received: 5 October 2022

Accepted: 30 January 2023

Published: 31 March 2023

1. Introduction

When a conversation drifts to the Ukrainian identity, a question about its ethnic and political sense arises first. In the most general way, ethnic identity is understood as a commitment to a given cultural background (Maehler, 2022) or to a home or host society (Epstein, Heizler (Cohen), 2015), as a subset of identity categories in which membership is determined by attributes associated with descent (Chandra, 2006).

V. Gamsakhurdia (2017) describes ethnic identity as ethnic belonging that endures transformations through time and changing environments. Ethnic identity and associated discourses influence

people's behavior, lifestyle, and values. Belief in a long common history consolidates and legitimates ethnic bonding.

If the ethnic identity is based on a commitment, its formation and availability must be subject to positive circumstances of life and communication. L. Kuang & S. Nishikawa (2021) emphasized the important role of positive ethnic socialization messages in adolescents' ethnic identity and self-esteem. In the longitudinal research by C. Houkamau et al. (2021), in-group warmth and ethnic identity centrality predicted increases in three wellbeing measures for New Zealand Māori: life satisfaction, self-esteem, and personal wellbeing.

However, real relations appear to be more complicated. B. Woo et al. (2019) proved that high racial/ethnic identity can act as an exacerbator for some ethnic groups and in certain social conditions; instead, moderate identity may be a protective resource to buffer any negative mental health consequences of discrimination for others.

In many societies, the ethnic identity is united or competes with the religious one. For example, the research by Ma. E.J. Macapagal et al. (2018) states that "the Muslims in the southern region of the Philippines identified themselves more strongly with their religious identity over their ethno-political affiliations." The opposite example is of two autonomies in Georgia – Abkhazia and Adzharia. The indigenous population of the first one is different from Georgians both ethnically and religiously (Abkhazians are Muslims); the Adzhars are ethnic Georgians professing Islam. During the USSR breakup, anti-Georgian protests were inspired in both Republics. In Abkhazia, they "succeeded," but in Adzharia they failed because the local population did not support them. The ethnic factor appeared to be stronger than the religious one.

The political identity has a shorter tradition of learning than the ethnic one, but its designed nature is more obvious and better proved. B. Gentry (2018) offers to consider the concept of a political identity as an inner narrative of one's political self. Identity is the story that we tell ourselves and others about who we are, who we were, and who we foresee ourselves to be in political life.

In western, first of all, American tradition, a political identity is often associated with party's preferences. Americans' political identity (either Democrat or Republican) exerted a strong influence on self-reports of emotional distress, threat perception, discomfort with exposure, support for restrictions, and perception of under/overreaction by individuals and institutions. The dominance of political identity has important implications for crisis management and reflects the influence of normative value differences between the parties, partisan messaging on the pandemic, and polarization in American politics (Collins et al., 2021). In the service field, conservatives (vs. liberals) are more satisfied with the products and services they consume. This happens because they are more likely to believe in free will and, therefore, to trust their own decisions (Fernandes et al., 2022).

Ethno-political identity is the combination of ethnic and political sides of identity. First of all, it is important in those societies where the ethnic problems become especially acute and a subject of political fight, like in Belgium (Cartrite,

2002), Pakistan (Khan, Byrne, 2018) or Bosnia and Herzegovina (Kočan, Zupančič, 2022). Even sport in many countries, especially in those which have recently become independent, has proved to be a highly politicized realm of national expression in which narratives of nation, identity, and culture are intensely articulated (Brentin, 2014).

The issue of ethno-political identity of the Ukrainians is often developed in a discussion about ethnic or political Ukrainian nation. The adepts of two extreme positions oppose. The first declare that Ukraine is a country of ethnic Ukrainians and the rest must either become ukrainized or leave. The others insist that Ukraine is a multinational country where no ethnos must dominate.

According to the census survey in 2001, Ukrainians amounted to 77.8% of the population, Russians – 17.3%, and representatives of other nationalities – 4.9%. Thus, one can say only about biethnicity rather than about polyethnicity of Ukraine. The Russian military aggression led to the situation when the majority of those who considered themselves ethnic Russians, especially among the youth, call themselves Ukrainians now. Under the data of general national surveys of Sociological Group "Rating", after the occupation of Crimea and a part of Donbas in 2014, the amount of the respondents who identified themselves as Russians decreased reaching 11%, and the amount of Ukrainians grew up to 87–88%. Now (April 2022), 92% of the respondents identify themselves as Ukrainians, 5% – as Russians, 3% – as other ethnoses (The Tenth National Survey..., 2022).

The Russian language spread significantly among the ethnic Ukrainians impedes the perception of Ukraine as a monoethnic territory: in 2001, 14.8% specified Russian as their mother tongue. V. Kulyk (2013) emphasizes the importance of the Ukrainian language as a crucial component of Ukrainian identity. Given the lack of independent statehood, Ukrainian identity was primarily ethno-cultural rather than civic. However, the contradictory policies of the Soviet regime produced a large-scale discrepancy between the language use and ethno-cultural identity. Moreover, independence boosted Ukrainian civic identity and stimulated reconsideration of its relationship with the ethno-cultural identity of the titular group. The perception of oneself as Ukrainian is gradually shifting from ethno-cultural to civic, particularly among the young generations.

Linguistic differences significantly specify the regional variants of the Ukrainian identities. Regional identity in Ukraine is determined by a unique combination of the historical heritage of the region, features of the ethno-confessional composition of

its population, socio-economic status, and specifics of lifestyle, traditions and culture. The politicization of regional differences in modern Ukraine has led to an increase in the regionalization of electoral political sympathies, the aggravation of social differences around geopolitical and ethno-cultural values (Balabanov et al., 2019).

Available contradictions could have become a strong factor of social conflicts. However, three decades of independent Ukrainian statehood existence showed that inside the Ukrainian nation (provided lack of external negative influences), there are powerful preventive mechanisms in force that kept the national organism from interethnic and interregional outbreaks.

A. Polese (2018) performed an interesting analysis of non-conflict uniting of general national and regional interests. He looked at the way identities are constructed, and renegotiated, at the everyday level, by ordinary people, by illustrating the competition between the Russian and Ukrainian languages in Odessa, a Ukrainian city on the Black sea, to look at the synergy generated by the competition between local and national narratives. The elites, the state, and its institutions “imagine” the nation in a more civic or ethnic manner, construct a national narrative intended to fit, and be applied in, all possible cases and geographical areas of the country. However, this narrative may sometimes contrast with some realities, situations, geographical areas, where it may be in conflict with the way locals perceive, and live, their own identity. If the state proposes a policy, without forcing or controlling to what extent citizens comply, and citizens create the impression to comply with the official discourse, without necessarily adopting it always and everywhere, then everyone seems satisfied. This combination of elastic rules and limited control allows local leaders and actors to feel relatively free and make it easier to accept a Ukrainian identity based on relatively flexible boundaries and markers. Thus, it is obvious that an optimum solution of the issue regarding ethnic or political nature of the Ukrainian nation is somewhere in the middle between these two options.

Summing up, it can be said that the Ukrainian ethno-political identity is the feeling of a deep individual and collective commitment to Ukraine as a territory and surrounding, to all Ukrainian – the language, culture, history, values, social surrounding, which initially had ethnic sense, and in historic and modern conditions it has been transformed in aspiration of political self-determination of Ukrainians as a nation.

2. Methods

The theoretical and comparative analysis and generalization of historical, geographical, political and sociological statements and data representing space-and-time and sense parameters of the Ukrainian identity were used as the main method. For that purpose, secondary data analysis was used (Clarke, Cosette, 2000; Johnston, 2014).

We have avoided a detailed description of the geographical parameters themselves, because there is a lot of information of this kind in the media landscape. The geographical borders are the basis for the analysis, but are not its subject.

3. Results and Discussion

Determination of geographical and mental parameters of the Ukrainian identity is based on division with regard to the external and internal borders. The external borders are between the Ukrainians and neighboring ethnoses/nations; the internal ones represent regional divisions of Ukraine.

3.1. The external Ukrainian–Russian boundaries

Dissociation with the most significant mental importance for Ukrainians’ identity occurred between them and the Russians. The most grounded problem relates to the claim concerning the succession from Ancient Rus. The interpretation born in the Russian ideological environment lies in the idea that Ancient Rus became a “cradle” for statehood of three “fraternal” peoples – Russian, Ukrainian and Belarusian. An idea that Rus itself is a prototype of current Ukraine opposes to this understanding. The historic ancestor of Belarus was Lithuania of that time (not contemporary!) – a Slavic country, which was Rus’ by origin and language, and comprised an integrated ethnic body with Rus.

There was no Russia in the current meaning. A part of its present north-western lands belonged to Rus, but the majority of the territory was inhabited with Ugro-Finnic tribes, and then it was colonized by Turkic and Mongol ones. Original Muscovy was not Rus. It was called Muscovian Rus later to connect its successor to the throne of the Tsardom of Muscovy with Ancient Rus and justify the renaming as Russia (an ancient Greek variant of the name of Rus) committed by Peter I in 1721. Conversion of the Tsardom of Muscovy to Christianity encouraged the spreading of the Church Slavonic language that

formed the basis for general Russian Koine from which the Russian language originated.

Renaming Muscovy as Russia is a pre-current basis of the Russian claims to believe itself to be Russia. A special role is played here by not distinguishing the terms Rus' and Russian, contrary to the neighboring languages – Ukrainian, Belorussian and Polish: Rus' – from Rus, Russian – from Russia. However, in the Russian language "the Russian language" and other identical notions are united in one – all of them are "Russian".

This non-distinguishing placed into the Russians' consciousness the belief that all Rus' is Russian and then, the Ukrainians and Belarusians are not individual peoples but a part of general Russian ethnos. When, due to many historic events, the bigger part of the Ukrainian ethnic lands appeared to be in the Russian empire, the Ukrainians started to be called "little Russians," and Muscovites became "great Russians." This terminology had to emphasize the leading role of the latter ones and dependent condition of the others. First, the word Little Russia meant the ethnic center of Rus, and since the 14th century, it was applied to the Ukrainian lands as such. However, in the Russian discourse, this word derived a derogatory and diminutive tone to determine an inferior part of "great" Russia.

As a part of the Russian empire, Ukrainians inhabited lands south- and eastward from their initial ethnic territory. The Russian state encouraged this relocation in all possible ways, using the Ukrainians as an instrument for colonization of huge Eurasian territories. While inhabiting these territories, the Ukrainians lost their Ukrainian identity within two or three generations. They mostly turned into Russians and partially formed a new mixed identity, like it happened to Zaporizhzhia Cossacks-Ukrainians who became the Russian Cossackdom with a specific, not absolutely Russian but already not Ukrainian identity.

Instead, in their main ethnic territory, the majority of Ukrainians saved their identity – first Rus' (Rusyn), then little Russian and Cossacks, and, at last, Ukrainian. The center where the Ukrainian identity as such arose was middle Dnieper Ukraine on the left and right banks of the Dnieper near Kyiv, where it gradually spread to the majority of the territories inhabited by the Ukrainians in the west, south and east.

The issue concerning the south-eastern territories of current Ukraine deserves special attention, as it is more problematic from the point of view of their population's Ukrainian identity in comparison with central and western regions.

These lands were colonized when they were part of the Russian empire, but mostly by Ukrainians. Russia won them in the fight against the Crimean Khanate and the Osman Empire, after that it "allowed" Ukrainians to inhabit these territories. Such historic circumstances are essential because the Russians are searching grounds there for claims to south-eastern parts of Ukraine (jointly with the Ukrainian population), calling them New Russia "presented" to the Ukrainians.

The Ukrainians claimed their rights to political independence from Russia after the Bolshevik takeover during the fights for national liberation in 1917–1922, having declared the Ukrainian People's Republic and the West Ukrainian People's Republic, and having united them in one state.

However, for different reasons, Ukrainians were not able to keep their independence and ultimately, the bigger part of Ukraine appeared under the control of Russian Bolsheviks. On the initiative of the Soviet leader, Lenin, a national-territorial demarcation was implemented, according to which dozens of Russia's nationalities received formal properties of national statehood. Several larger peoples, including Ukrainians, received their statehood as Union Republics, formally founding the Soviet Union. In this way, the Bolshevik authorities to some extent met national aspirations of different ethnoses, including Ukrainians. Eastern lands of the Ukrainian ethnic territory appeared in the body of the Russian Federation – the biggest and the main Soviet Republic.

The Soviet regime encouraged denationalization of Ukraine in different ways. During so-called collectivization (collective farms foundation), wealthy farmers were sent to Siberia. Ukrainians villages that died out during the Holodomor were peopled with the those born and raised in Russia. Nationally conscious intellectuals were killed during repressions, while those who agreed to accept the Communist system were kept alive. Graduating specialists were sent to work to Russia and other republics where they did not have any chances to preserve their Ukrainian identity; moreover, instead, Russian workers were sent back to Ukraine.

Such Russification gave its results. Each consecutive Ukrainian generation became more and more Russian speaking and closer in their identity to the Russians. The Russian language became a sign of loyalty to the communist regime and belonging to higher strata of the social system. By contrast, principal Ukrainian speaking was considered as a sign of anti-Soviet beliefs, which directly endangered its speakers. Lingual Russification caused a change in the identity from Ukrainian for Russian-Soviet or

its subordinate variant – Ukrainian-Russian-Soviet.

The Ukrainian identity was better preserved in western regions, which were joined during and as a result of World War II, and in the central Ukrainian province where the population spoke mostly pidgin (the Ukrainian-Russian mixture) and did not have notable ambitions. The towns became Russian speaking faster and faster. There was more of everything Russian – first of all, the language, as well as identity – in southern and eastern regions, especially in big and medium towns.

One can speak about two main categories of the Russian language, culture and identity bearers in Ukraine. The first ones are the migrants from Russia for whom a great Russian imperial identity is a complex of ethnic superiority, and claims to exceptionalism were a natural component of self-consciousness and the worldview. The other category comprises Russified Ukrainians who themselves or whose ancestors started to speak Russian instead of Ukrainian and placed many efforts to stop being Ukrainians and to become proper Russians. The most typical situation of this change is a move from a Ukrainian speaking village to a Russian speaking town with an aspiration to join “cultural” town life and get rid of the Ukrainian identity. The meeting of these two identities traumatized in different ways confirmed the Russian discourse of Ukraine as a smaller, younger, and inferior part of Russia.

Two groups can be distinguished among those who were trying to save the Ukrainian identity. The first one (“little Russians”) – Ukrainian speaking people oriented on the Ukrainian culture in its folklore-ethnic variant, but subordinate to the Russian-Soviet discourse. These were Ukrainian speaking intellectuals who survived in the conditions of the Russian repressions and searched for a compromise between Russification and at least symbolic preservation of the Ukrainian sense of cultural and social life. On one hand, these people – teachers, writers, actors, etc. – played an important role in the relative saving of the Ukrainian language, culture and identity¹. On the other hand, the Soviet regime actively used them for propaganda of so-called “proletarian internationalism” showing a seeming explosion of the Ukrainian national culture in the conditions of total Russifying pressure.

The second group is more determinant Ukrainian patriots who were consequently called nationalists, with only negative, antihuman meaning attributed to this term. These people lived all over the territory of Ukraine; however, their original weight was higher

in western regions, gradually decreasing eastwards. After all, the main line of mental division between Ukrainians and Russians lied along the state border of Ukraine and Russia.

Ukrainians in Ukraine and Ukrainians in Russia have different, often principally different identity. It was demonstrated especially brightly during the period of Ukraine’s independence and too brightly – under the influence of the Russian military aggression. “Ukrainian” Ukrainians more and more expressively renew and coddle the Ukrainian identity in themselves². “Russian” Ukrainians under the influence of the Russian public thought and official propaganda face even more significant alienation from Ukrainianness, experiencing a whole range of negative feelings concerning Ukraine.

Demarcation between the Ukrainians and Belarusians was much less dramatic – perhaps, because they rarely had to solve the issue of borders at the level of the independent political subjects. If the ethnic border itself between these two peoples was quite clear, the line of interstate divisions was not principal for Ukrainians and Belarusians, because they did not make them. In Ancient Rus, Ukrainians and Belarusians belonged to one Rus ethnic area. In the Kingdom of Poland and the Grand Duchy of Lithuania, they were the issues of regional rather than interstate divisions. Then, the borders were marked by the Russian empire and the Soviet Union. Thus, the border between Ukraine and Belarus appeared to be quite constant and did not cause problems.

However, approximately one million ethnic Ukrainians of the Brest lands – south western part of Belarus, despite their distinctive Ukrainian language, received a new Belarusian identity. Similarly, several tens of thousand ethnic Belarusians living in the north of Ukraine turned into Ukrainians having saved Belarusian speaking in everyday communication. This fact does not have a significant representation in mass consciousness of either Ukrainians or Belarusians and affects feelings of an insignificant part of hyperpatriotic persons in both countries.

3.2. Internal division of Ukraine being influenced by the Russian factor

The Russian factor appeared to be determining not only on the external borders of the Ukrainian identity spread, but also in internal Ukrainian differentiation. No other influences – Polish, Romanian, Jewish,

¹ They are the teachers whom the author thanks for comprehension of his Ukrainian identity in those dangerous times.

² Their smaller part due to political polarization of the society moved to the pro-Russian figures.

Turkish, American, etc. – even jointly reached such power as the Russian ones had before and have now.

According to decades’ long (since 1994) psychosemantic monitoring of the mass political consciousness held by the Institute of Social and Political Psychology, NAES of Ukraine, the Russian factor belongs to three most powerful ones that determine the sense, condition and tendencies of development of the Ukrainians’ political consciousness (two more – perception of reforms and attitude to authorities). In individual periods (especially at the beginning of the 2000s and before parliamentary and presidential elections), it becomes leading by the power of influence (Vasiutynskyi (ed.), 1997, pp. 42–67).

Within Ukraine, the Russian factor specified its division into “two Ukraines” – Central-Western and South-Eastern. This division found its expression the most clearly during the “Orange Revolution” in 2004. Later, pro-Ukrainian statements were significantly spread in South-Eastern regions where they strengthened the Ukrainian identity. Historic and political events specified the mental division of South-Eastern Ukraine into several significantly different regions. Crimea clearly stands out – this is a peninsula in the Black Sea (Fig. 1) inhabited by Crimean Tatars (one of Turkic peoples) since the earliest times, and sporadically in different historic periods by Ukrainians, and intensively in the Russian and Soviet times by Russians.

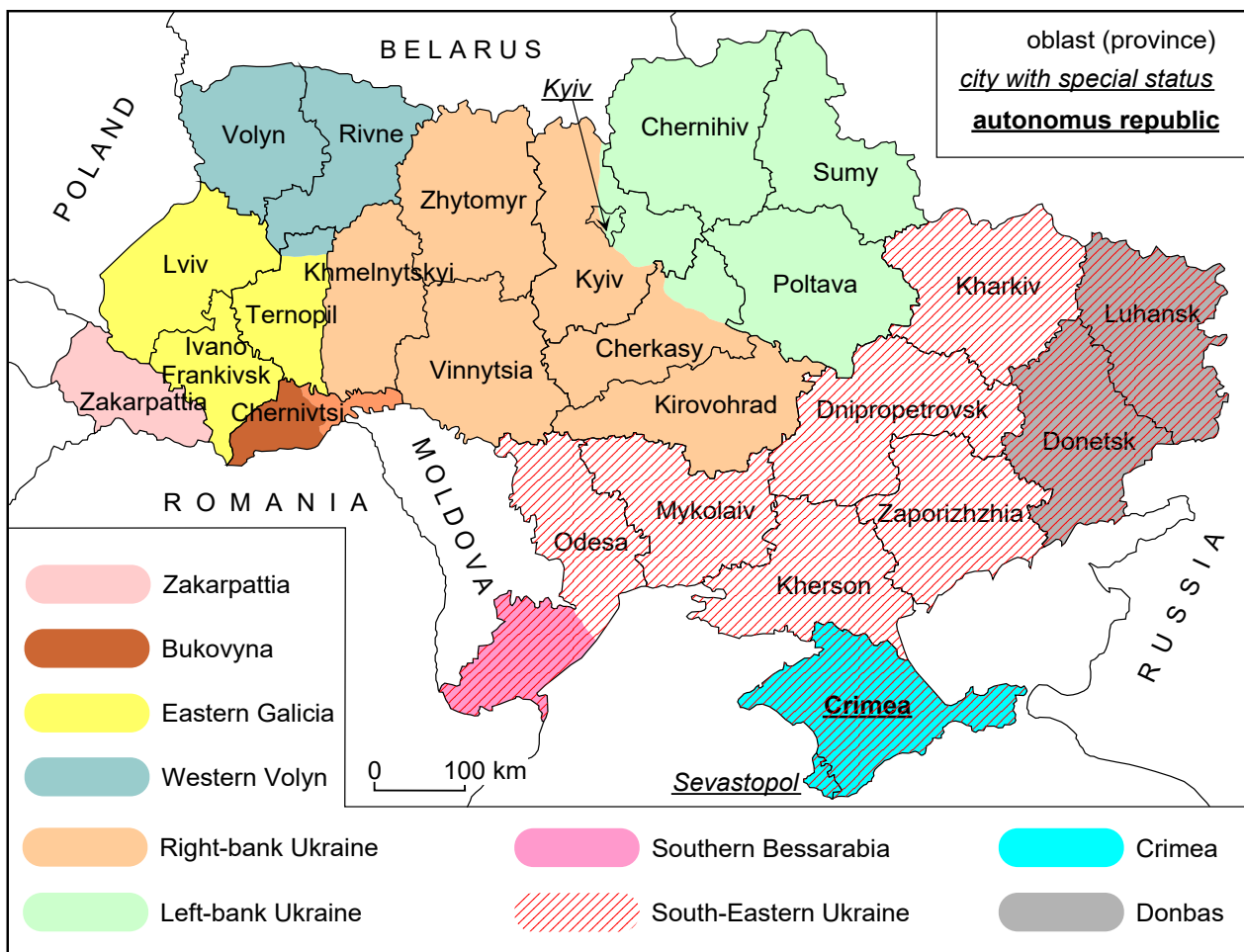


Fig. 1. Modern administrative regions of Ukraine mentioned in the paper
Source: Own study.

In the interwar period, the peninsula had a status of autonomy as part of the Russian Federation. In 1944, Crimean Tatars were deported to Central Asian Republics. Inhabitants from the central regions of Russia were relocated to substitute them, which led to a quantitative dominance of ethnic Russians (58.5% according to the census of 2001 (About number..., 2001).

As the economic development of Crimea slowed down, in 1954 central Moscow authorities transferred it to Ukraine. After this, populating Crimea by the Ukrainians increased (in 2001 they amounted to 24.4% of the population), but at the same time Ukrainians in formally Ukrainian Crimea underwent accelerated Russification, and in their identity they tended towards the Russians. During

the years of independence, Ukraine-wide tendencies of Ukrainian revival also took place in Crimea, but they were less intense.

When the Soviet Union broke up, Crimean Tatars received an opportunity to return to Crimea (according to the census of 2001, there were 12.1% of them there (About number..., 2001). It is important to specify that during the annexation of Crimea by Russia in 2014, Crimean Tatars appeared to be much more pro-Ukrainian than ethnic Ukrainians.

In the east of Ukraine, Donbas stands out. The name is an abbreviation of Donets Coalfield (Donetsk and Luhansk Oblasts (Fig. 1)). Long ago, it was poorly populated Wild Fields (a steppe frontier region), partially inhabited by Ukrainians, and partially by nomads. Later, in the periods of industrialization, it was inhabited by people born and raised in different parts of Russia and the whole Soviet Union, having formed a multinational environment denationalized to great extent. However, a Ukrainian ethnic element prevailed there, with the dominant Russian language.

If Russian-speaking natives out of Ukraine and their descendants ensured prevailing Russian identity in Crimea, in Donbas this role was mostly performed by Russified Ukrainians. A smaller part of them kept their Ukrainian identity, a part changed for Russian, but the biggest part of the population there formed a diverse local identity with Ukrainian, Russian, Soviet and regional elements. Opposition to the general Ukrainian identity became – not categorically, but notably – an important peculiarity of their statements and aspirations. At the same time, they did not incline so much towards Russia as they tried to spread their values to whole Ukraine³.

The locals of Crimea and Donbas were the ones who perceived the events of Maidan in 2004 the most critically. A part of them were scared and encouraged to protest. Simultaneously, pro-Ukrainian strata performed respective political promotions. That allegedly gave “grounds” to speak about a civil war in Ukraine. However, it is obvious that without forceful intervention of Russia “both Ukraines” would agree with each other, like before.

The difference between big industrial cities – oblast centers and other agglomerations where Ukrainian ethnic population prevails but the language is Russian, and Ukraine-speaking province is distinctive for Steppe Ukraine and the Black Sea region (Dnipropetrovska, Kharkivka, Khersonska, Mykolaivska, Odeska and Zaporizka Oblasts).

Our own research of the Russian-speaking population of the South-Eastern regions of Ukraine even in 2009 showed a notably prevailing Ukrainian identity in it. Only 17.9% out of 1,292 people questioned identified themselves as ethnic Russians. Instead self-identification as citizens of Ukraine (36.8%) or Russian-speaking residents of Ukraine (34.1%) prevailed. If at the level of socio-political self-identification they targeted at saving the connection with the Russian state, language, culture, at the socio-perceptive level their preferences moved towards the acceptance of the Ukrainian surrounding. “Russian” was “theirs” in a more symbolic sense whilst “Ukrainian” – in a more pragmatic one (Vasiutynskyi, 2012a, pp. 45–47).

In the same research, we determined 5 principal statements of the Russian-speaking residents of Ukraine concerning their integration into the contemporary Ukrainian society: active integration (used by 6.5% respondents), passive integration (23.2%), sub-integration – at the level of a region (50.3%), passive counter-integration (12.4%), active counter-integration (7.6%) (Vasiutynskyi, 2012b, pp. 170–174).

Passive integration and sub-integration as the statements that are the most widespread among the Russian-speaking citizens showed the major senses of their ethno-political orientations at that time: to live in Ukraine, in the Ukrainian environment, to be Ukrainian citizens and bearers of the Ukrainian identity but to keep their lingual-cultural specifics and possibly, respective socio-psychological privileges. The latter ones include belonging to urban and “great” Russian culture, higher self-estimation and self-confidence, better opportunities and more modern areas of personal development.

Simultaneously, the majority of the Russian-speaking residents of Ukraine do not want to become part of Russia. As the events in 2014 and even more in 2022 showed, Ukrainian patriotism of the Russian-speaking population and the fact that only a small part of it welcomed the Russian occupation were a great surprise for the Russian authorities and society. Instead, the prevailing majority treated the Russian intervention negatively, and there are a lot of Russian native speakers among those who are fighting against the Russians.

The regional division of Central-Western Ukraine is more diverse. The difference between central and western regions is the most significant there.

Within the borders of Central Ukraine a division was formed into Left Bank Ukraine (Chernihivska, Poltavska and Sumska Oblasts) and Right Bank Ukraine (Cherkaska, Khmelnytska, Kirovohradska,

³ A popular slogan of the President Yanukovich's time, who was born and raised in Donbas – Everything will be Donbas!

Kyivska, Vinnytska and Zhytomyrska Oblasts) (Fig. 1) along the Dnieper. These two parts became the center of the Ukrainian statehood formation and were usually together part of one state (Ancient Rus, the Grand Duchy of Lithuania, the Kingdom of Poland, the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth, the Russian Empire, the Soviet Union). Only a little longer than one hundred years ago, in the 17th–18th century, were they divided between Poland and Russia along the Dnieper. It is hard to say if they were exactly the years that caused certain differences in identity (rather mentality) of the Ukrainians on the both banks of the Dnieper.

Our psycho-semantic research recorded three mental peculiarities of the Left Bank territory residents in comparison with the Right Bank residents: higher sympathy with the Soviet Social economy, in particular, with collective farms (possibly, due to the lower land capacity, which specified fewer possibilities to have individual economy), a relatively lower level of the Ukrainian patriotism (which is strange because the spreading of the Ukrainian language here was much more significant years ago than on the Right Bank territory, where beside Russian there was much Polish and Yiddish)⁴, notable magic-mystic thinking in explanation of life and political phenomena (and consequently, irrationalism in electing authorities).

Western Ukraine is the territory, which was out of the Soviet area and belonged to three different countries. It is the most divided into regions. The identity of its population became a result of long influences both from Russia and from neighboring ethnoses and states.

3.3. The Ukrainian identity formed in mutual interaction with western neighbors

Poles are the most influential western neighbors. For centuries, Polish political and mental influences ensured expansion of western customs and values into Ukraine, mostly performing the function of opposition to Russifying tendencies, especially among the Ukrainian nobility and cultural elites.

Polish influences had the most effect in the current territories of Western Ukraine (except Transcarpathia (Fig. 1)), Right Bank Ukraine, Northern Left Bank Ukraine. However, in the South-eastern parts, they also took place and are seen now – mostly as spreading Catholicism. At a certain time, Poles

intensively propagated Catholicism in Orthodox Ukrainian lands. Catholicism from Poles was spread exclusively in Polish, which significantly decreased its efficiency. The compromise reached in 1596 as the foundation of Greek-Catholic Church using the Ukrainian language had a better effect. It operates under the eastern (i.e. Orthodox) procedure but is subordinate to Vatican.

Poles as a state nation put many efforts to Polonize Ukrainians, the Ukrainian nobility, first of all, and achieved certain success in this regard. In different regions of Ukraine, Poles amounted to a significant share of the population, but during the Soviet and post-Soviet time their number significantly decreased. Sometimes, discussions arise who Ukrainian Poles are by origin. They are obviously both ethnic Poles who arrived at different times from Polish ethnic territories (there are more of them in the west), and ethnic Ukrainians whose ancestors converted to Catholicism and, consequently, spoke in the Polish language. Nowadays, Ukrainian Catholics are using the Ukrainian language in church more and more: first, it was on the Vatican's initiative, and now the believers themselves, especially the young generation, take Ukrainian speaking for granted and as more corresponding to their Ukrainian identity.

Polish influences were the strongest in Eastern Halychyna (Ivano-Frankivska, Lvivska and Ternopil'ska Oblasts (Fig. 1)) with the center in Lviv, where as part of the Austro-Hungarian empire, Ukrainians and Poles competed almost as equals. Halychyna was the center of the Ukrainian national movement both in Austria-Hungary and in the interwar period in Poland. Poles had a qualitative advantage: they had more power, in the city culture of that time, there was more Polish content. Ukrainians had a quantitative advantage: according to the census of the population in 1900 in Austria and Hungary (Chorny, 2001, pp. 40–41) and in 1931 in Poland (Chorny, 2001, pp. 64–69), the ratio of Ukrainians was higher than the ratio of Poles in all the districts of Eastern Halychyna except Lviv (and two more districts under the Polish census).

Nowadays, Halychyna inhabitants are noted for the highest level of patriotism, religious commitment (among them Greek Catholic believers prevail), and adherence to traditional values in Ukraine.

The big north-western Ukrainian area of Volyn in 1920 was divided approximately in halves between Soviet Russia and Poland. During two decades, once integral and homogeneous territory was divided into two mentally different parts. Eastern Volyn experienced all disasters of sub-Soviet Ukraine – starvation, repressions, etc. Western Volyn (now they are Volyn'ska and Rivnens'ka Oblasts (Fig. 1)) as

⁴ Probably, the reason for this was actually a lack of language and mental competition.

part of Poland gained a relative civil and national freedom from centuries of restrictions in Russia. Repressions by the Polish state also took place, but they were much softer than in the Soviet Union. This combination of certain national freedom (particularly being influenced by more conscious Halychyna) and Polish repressions fostered essential anti-Polish attitudes in these territories as a reply. The infamous "Volynian massacre" in 1943, when Ukrainians and Poles mutually and violently murdered each other in the conditions of German occupation, became their terrible result. Currently, for the Ukrainian society, it is hard to admit that Ukrainians were instigators of that massacre and that their actions led to a bigger number of victims. Ukrainians are trying not to remember this hard page in history: not to know what was going on, devalue the importance of those events, place responsibility on Poles, and the German or Soviet regimes.

The border between Poland and Soviet Ukraine established in 1945 brought longstanding Ukrainian-Polish disputes concerning ethno-political belonging of Eastern Halychyna and Western Volyn to a close. The bigger part of these lands became Ukrainian; however, a narrow strap of ethnic Ukrainian territories was passed to Poland. Then, Poland and the Soviet Union exchanged the population when the majority of ethnic Poles left Ukraine for Poland, and part of ethnic Ukrainians – left Poland for Ukraine.

Slovaks and partially Czechs are other Slavic ethnoses neighboring Ukrainians. Their influences were the most notable in Transcarpathia, especially within the interwar period, when this territory was included into then-existing Czechoslovakia. Before that, both Ukrainians and Slovaks were under Hungarian and Austrian influences.

Currently, Slovaks and Slovakia little influence the Ukrainians of Transcarpathia. Even if their mental influence takes place, it is rather as part of the European Union, attracting Ukrainians with an opportunity to go to earn or to live in more comfortable conditions.

Instead, there is a problem of Ukrainians in the Priashiv Region who reside in the north-east of Slovakia. Their majority, for different reasons, do not consider themselves Ukrainians but an individual ethnos – Rusyns. There is a Rusyn movement in Transcarpathia, too. The main reason for political Rusynness is relatively late "return" to the main group of Ukrainians. Hungarian colonization during the 11th–16th centuries and then the long stay under Austro-Hungary pulled Transcarpathian Rusyns from other Rus' and then Ukrainian lands for a long time. That is why, the process of comprehending

themselves as Ukrainians was much slower than in neighboring Halychyna and Bukovyna. Joining Transcarpathia to Soviet Ukraine in 1945 ultimately solved the issue of the Ukrainian nature of local Slavic-and-Rus' population.

The Hungarian influences were especially strong in Transcarpathia, where they had dominated for centuries. However, long Hungarization had a relatively weak effect and led to Hungarization of a small part of Transcarpathian Ukrainians only – mostly those who lived in enclaves among the Hungarian population.

The ideas of Rusynness were significantly weaker in Bukovyna (Fig. 1) where Ukrainians lived near Romanians in Austria-Hungary, and then in Romania. In 1940, Soviet troops occupied Bukovyna and divided it between Soviet Ukraine (Northern Bukovyna where Ukrainian population prevailed, now this is Chernivetska Oblast) and Romania (Southern Bukovyna where there were more Romanians).

The issue of Rusynness/Ukrainianness has remained problematic for Ukrainians of neighboring countries – Poland, Slovakia, Serbia, Romania. When in Ukraine mental outbreaks arise, like the events in 1991 (declaration of independence), 2004 (Orange Revolution), 2013–2014 (Revolution of Dignity), 2022 (a new stage of the Russia military aggression), in Rusyn circles adherence to own Ukrainianness arises. When the national enthusiasm of the majority of Ukrainians becomes weaker, the centrifugal tendencies strengthen among Rusyns, too.

The territory of common dwelling of Ukrainians and Moldovans is much bigger than with Romanians. Moldovans have the same origin and language as Romanians, but due to long historic processes they segregated into an individual ethno-political community. The Russian-Soviet influences have mostly led to that. Moldovans were imposed with the "Moldavian" language – Romanian, in fact, but with Cyrillic (Russian) characters.

Inhabiting jointly big territories of the Ukrainian-Moldavian borderland, Ukrainians and Moldovans hardly had inter-ethnic conflicts or disputes. Their being in the environment of the Russian-Soviet discourse eliminated a need and a possibility to express mutual complaints.

Certain contradictions strengthened after 1991; they mainly concern ethno-political and lingual-cultural rights of Ukrainians in Moldova and the Moldovans in Ukraine. In the most general way, one can say that the Ukrainians in Moldova do not have a high level of the Ukrainian self-consciousness and mainly identify themselves with the Russian minority. In particular, this is seen in preferring

Russian-language schools for their children rather than Ukrainian-language ones. The Ukrainian identity as such has been strengthened over the last years.

A great tangle of Ukrainian-Moldovan concerns arose around Transdnistria – a Moldavian autonomy, established years ago in ethnically Ukrainian lands and then transferred to the Moldavian Soviet Republic. In 1991, Transdnistria announced the exit from Moldova but it remains unrecognized by the world community. The population of this region includes three ethnic groups – Moldovans, Ukrainians and Russians.

By their ethno-political views, Ukrainians of Transdnistria tend mostly towards Russia; they are less Ukraine- or Moldova-oriented. Their identity is influenced by Transdnistria as a quasi-state formation, whose citizens they are or have to be, Moldova, which considers Transdnistria as its integral part, Russia, which is the main source of the whipping up tensions around “the Transdnistrian problem”, Romania, which actively pulls Moldova into Romanian political and mental environment, at last, Ukraine, which is the most passive in this case and responds weakly to the interests of the Ukrainian population in this territory.

The South Odesa region is the most diverse region of Ukraine: Moldovans⁵, Russians⁶, Bulgarians⁷, Turks-Gagauzs⁸, Romani, Albanians reside along with Ukrainians, and before Serbians, Poles, Germans, Jews lived there.

This territory of former Bessarabia (Fig. 1) was included into Ukraine in 1940. Like in other polyethnic regions, Russification of the Soviet period happened here faster than in monoethnic communities. In independent Ukraine, the region's residents are becoming reoriented towards the Ukrainian political identity – slowly, inertly, but without obvious resistance and conflicts.

3.4. Internal Ukrainian extraregional divisions

For centuries the Jewish issue for the Ukrainian identity was specifically topical. First, because in the Ukrainian territories the Jews were second-third ethnic group by the population number, i.e. there were a lot of them and their needs and solutions had weight. Second, like in many other countries, Jews

took an individual place in the society: as essentially different and that is why unclear, as wealthy and that is why the ones who excited envy, as clever and dexterous and that is why more successful than “ours.”

All these components in the attitude were the basis for antisemitism – popular one, and therefore political. The content of fiction and publicist literature in the 19th-20th centuries shows that antisemitism was an essential component of the Ukrainian patriotism and came into the Ukrainian identity through it. The Ukrainian social and national-liberating movement often turned anti-Semitic and sometimes led to bloody Jew bashings.

The Ukrainians are ascribed with the glory of bitter anti-Semites, although Ukrainian antisemitism was hardly much stronger than in neighboring Poland or Russia. In any case, during the years of independence in Ukraine there was no officially proclaimed antisemitism, or powerful anti-Semitic movements that would receive support from a significant part of society. Anti-Semitic slogans, even if they are heard, go from the far periphery of the Ukrainian social life. Election of an ethnic Jew as the President of Ukraine in 2019 became a convincing proof of mental freedom from anti-Semitic sentiments of the majority of Ukrainians.

The ratio between the people of urban and rural origin and the way of life is an important vector in determining the Ukrainian identity. The problematic nature of this vector is hard to understand for an average European for whom the difference between life in a city and in a small village is the matter of a free personal choice. In Ukraine this difference was objectively big and subjectively significant not long ago. Life conditions, assessment of their social condition and self-estimation of residents of towns and villagers were mostly in favor of the former. The villagers were much more restricted in their rights and opportunities – from the times of former serfdom to Soviet collective farm slavery. Suffice it to say that villagers started to receive passports and that is why became able to change their place of residence without permit from authorities only in 1976.

The village did not have many advantages the urban life had – sewerage, central heating, asphalt roads, transport communications, shops full of goods (according to the Soviet standards), satisfactory medical service, etc. This difference as an established norm came into Ukraine from Russia where it is stronger⁹.

⁵ Among them there are those who call themselves Romanians.

⁶ Incl. Iypovany – Old Believers, who escaped there pursuing in Russia in the 17th-18th centuries.

⁷ A part of them resides in the south of Zaporizka Oblast.

⁸ The majority of them appeared in the body of Moldova where they founded pro-Russian Gagauz autonomy.

⁹ For example, in Austria-Hungary it was much slighter, which is still notable in former Austria-controlled regions.

In Ukraine the relationship between the urban and rural residents was complicated by the problem of identity. In towns and cities, especially in big industrial centers, the Russian language was and is dominant, instead Ukrainian prevails in villages. That partially became a reason for views of the Ukrainian nation as “farmers,” incapable of independent existence. These views were accepted, to a great extent, by Ukrainians themselves and have become part of their identity as a complex of ethno-cultural and political inferiority and perception of their non-statehood as a natural condition.

Nowadays, Ukrainians, first of all, youth, are overcoming the stupid paradigm of the Russian speaking town/city and Ukrainian-speaking village quite confidently. This change is one of the trends in positive development of the Ukrainian identity. The opponents of the independent existence of Ukraine and Ukrainians who do not want and cannot lose such an essential argument for their self-esteem through humiliation of Ukrainianness in others and in themselves let this illusion go harder.

4. Summary

Generalization of the geographical and mental correlations provides grounds to speak about a complicated structure of territorial spread of the Ukrainian identity. First of all, one should speak about its external boundaries. If more or less clear and long-standing identity is taken into account, these boundaries mostly coincide with the state border of Ukraine. If it concerns the identity that is more blurred, mixed, and adapted to non-Ukrainian conditions, it does not have clear geographical borders and accompanies migration of Ukrainians to different countries.

References

- About number and composition population of UKRAINE by data All-Ukrainian population census'2001 data*, <http://2001.ukrcensus.gov.ua/eng/results/general/nationality/> (accessed 10 August 2022).
- Balabanov K., Pashyna N., Lysak V., 2019, Regional Identity in Ukraine: Formation Factors and Functions, *Studia Politica: Romanian Political Science Review*, 19(3–4), 491–513.
- Brentin D., 2014, “Now You See Who Is a Friend and Who an Enemy.” Sport as an Ethno-political Identity Tool in Postsocialist Croatia, *Comparative Southeast European Studies*, 62(2), 187–207. doi: 10.1515/soeu-2014-620208
- Cartrite B., 2002, Contemporary ethno-political identity and the future of the Belgian state, *Nationalism and Ethnic Politics*, 8(3), 43–71. doi: 10.1080/13537110208428669
- Chandra K., 2006, What is ethnic identity and does it matter?, *Annual Review of Political Science*, 9, 397–424. doi: 10.1146/annurev.polisci.9.062404.170715
- Chorny S., 2001, *Nacional'nij sklad naseleñnâ Ukraïni v XX storìččî. Dovidnik* (Eng. The ethnic composition of the population of Ukraine in the 20th century. Directory), Kartografiâ, Kyiv.
- Clarke S.P., Cossette S., 2000, Secondary analysis: Theoretical, methodological and practical considerations, *Canadian Journal of Nursing Research*, 32(3), 109–129.
- Collins R.N., Mandel D.R., Schywiola S.S., 2021, Political Identity Over Personal Impact: Early U.S. Reactions to the COVID-19 Pandemic, *Frontiers in Psychology*, 12, 607639. doi: 10.3389/fpsyg.2021.607639
- Epstein G.S., Heizler (Cohen) O., 2015, Ethnic identity: a theoretical framework, *IZA Journal of Migration*, 4, 9. doi: 10.1186/s40176-015-0033-z

In some countries (Russia, Belarus and other post-Soviet countries), Ukrainians experience an intensive Russification and soon lose their Ukrainian identity. In others, mostly westwards of Ukraine, they adjust to local conditions of life and keep partially the Ukrainian identity in the Ukrainian ethnic enclaves or gradually lose it during next generations.

Inside Ukraine, the main boundary divides so called “two Ukraines”: Central-Western (more Ukrainian) and South-Eastern (Ukrainian-Russian). This boundary approximately coincides with administrative borders of the relevant oblasts. The Russian military aggression largely decreased the available differences, increasing dramatically the Ukrainian nature of the South-Eastern regions.

If one speaks about “three Ukraines”, one individually detaches Western Ukraine – the most Ukrainian-speaking and nationally conscious. Within its boundaries, there is a division into Eastern Halychyna, Western Volyn, Northern Bukovyna and Transcarpathia, which are different with regard to their historic experience of belonging to the Ukrainian nation and state and mutual interaction with neighboring countries. Central Ukraine is the most homogeneous and is a mental basis of the Ukrainian ethnic and political nation. Within the boundaries of South-Eastern Ukraine, one distinguishes Crimea as the territory of co-living of the most native Crimean Tatar ethnos, Ukrainians as representatives of the title ethnos and the Russian ethnic majority. Donbas has become a specific region where regional and pro-Russian identities oppose each other. The rest of the territories in South East have local lingual-and-cultural flair, but from the point of view of the political identity it is quite a homogenous region.

- Fernandes D., Ordabayeva N., Han K., Jung J., Mittal V., 2022, How Political Identity Shapes Customer Satisfaction, *Journal of Marketing*, 86(6), 116–134. doi: 10.1177/00222429211057508
- Gamsakhurdia V., 2017, Quest for ethnic identity in the modern world—The Georgian case, *Cogent Social Sciences*, 3, 1309735. doi: 10.1080/23311886.2017.1309735
- Gentry B., 2018, Political Identity: Meaning, Measures, and Evidence, [in:] B. Gentry, *Why Youth Vote*, Springer, Cham, 19–48. doi: 10.1007/978-3-319-69608-9_2
- Goble P., 2016, Russian national identity and the Ukrainian crisis, *Communist and Post-Communist Studies*, 49(1), 37–43. doi: 10.1016/j.postcomstud.2015.12.006
- Houkamau C., Milojev P., Greaves L., Dell K., Sibley Ch.G., Phinney J., 2021, Indigenous ethnic identity, in-group warmth, and psychological wellbeing: A longitudinal study of Māori, *Current Psychology*. First Online, doi: 10.1007/s12144-021-01636-4
- Johnston M.P., 2014, Secondary data analysis: a method of which the time has come, *Qualitative and Quantitative Methods in Libraries*, 3, 619–626.
- Khan S.A., Byrne S., 2018, Cultural Politics Through the Eyes of Mohajir Women. The Dynamics of Mohajir Identity Conflict in Pakistan, *Journal for Peace and Justice Studies*, 28(2), 137–156. doi: 10.5840/peacejustice201828219
- Kočan F., Zupančič R., 2022, “Ethnicizing” the EU’s Involvement in Post-conflict Societies: The Case of Ontological Insecurity in Republika Srpska, *Uluslararası İlişkiler / International Relations*, 19(73), 113–127. doi: 10.33458/uidergisi.1094578
- Kuang L., Nishikawa S., 2021, Ethnic Socialization, Ethnic Identity, and Self-Esteem in Chinese Mulao Adolescents, *Frontiers in Psychology*, 12, 730478. doi: 10.3389/fpsyg.2021.730478
- Kulyk V., 2013, Language and Identity in post-Soviet Ukraine: Transformation of an Unbroken Bond, *Australian and New Zealand Journal of European Studies*, 5(2), 14–23.
- Macapagal Ma.E.J., Montiel C.J., Canuday J.J.P., 2018, The Unifying and Divisive Effects of Social Identities: Religious and Ethno-political Identities Among Mindanao Muslims in the Philippines, *Journal of Pacific Rim Psychology*, 12, e28. doi: 10.1017/prp.2018.16
- Maehler D.B., 2022, Determinants of ethnic identity development in adulthood: A longitudinal study, *British Journal of Developmental Psychology*, 40, 46–72. doi: 10.1111/bjdp.12384
- Polese A., 2018, Building a Ukrainian Identity in Odessa: Negotiation of Markers and Informal Nationalism, *Otoritas: Jurnal Ilmu Pemerintahan*, 8(1), 1–16. doi: 10.26618/ojip.v8i1.1014
- The Tenth National Survey: Ideological Markers of the War (April 27, 2022)*, 2022, Rejting, https://ratinggroup.ua/en/research/ukraine/desyaty_obschenacionalnyy_opros_ideologicheskie_markery_voyny_27_aprelya_2022.html (accessed 10 August 2022).
- Vasiutynskiy V.O. (Ed.), 1997, *Psihologiâ masovoi političnoi svidomosti ta povedinki* (Eng. Psychology of mass political consciousness and behaviour), DOK-K, Kyiv.
- Vasiutynskiy V.O., 2012a, Social’na identičnist, predstavnikiv rosijsko-movnoi spil’nosti (Eng. Social identity of representatives of the Russian-speaking community), [in:] V.O. Vasiutynskiy (Ed.), *Rosijs’komovna spil’nota v Ukraïni: social’no-psihologičnyj analiz* (Eng. Russian-speaking community in Ukraine: social and psychological analysis), Imeks-LTD, Kirovograd, 170–178. <https://ispp.org.ua/wp-content/uploads/2020/04/monVasut-2012.pdf> (accessed 10 August 2022).
- Vasiutynskiy V.O., 2012b, Poziciï predstavnikiv rosijs’komovnoi spil’noti šodo ukraïnizacii (Eng. The position of representatives of the Russian-speaking community about Ukrainization), [in:] V.O. Vasiutynskiy (Ed.), *Rosijs’komovna spil’nota v Ukraïni: social’no-psihologičnyj analiz* (Eng. Russian-speaking community in Ukraine: social and psychological analysis), Imeks-LTD, Kirovograd, 45–54. <https://ispp.org.ua/wp-content/uploads/2020/04/monVasut-2012.pdf> (accessed 10 August 2022).
- Woo B., Fan W., Tran Th.V., Takeuchi D.T., 2019, The role of racial/ethnic identity in the association between racial discrimination and psychiatric disorders: A buffer or exacerbator? *SSM – Population Health*, 7, 100378. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ssmph.2019.100378>