

ON THE ISSUE OF THE PERCEPTION OF THE OTHER

Tatevik VATYAN, *International Scientific-Educational Center, National Academy of Sciences, Republic of Armenia*

E-mail: vatyantatevik@gmail.com

DOI:10.24234/miopap.v12i2.107

ABSTRACT

Perceptions of the other have been known since ancient times. References to these perceptions can be found in mythological tales of different peoples, historical sources, and anthropological studies. In the psychological discipline, the perception of the other is also in the spotlight, both among social and clinical psychologists. Of particular importance are the processes of interaction, communication, and socialization of individuals in society between different cultural and social groups, during which perceptions of the other become relevant. Perceptions of the other are characteristic of all societies. However, in different historical periods, perceptions and attitudes towards both one's own, native environment, and foreign, alien societies have undergone certain changes. Perceptions of the other have undergone certain transformations. The other was perceived as a non-local person, standing outside the native social and cultural environment; the other was accepted as a person who opposed the native environment and did not follow social norms; he could also be perceived as unfamiliar and inaccessible to cognition; in some cases also as someone with incomprehensible and inexplicable power. However, negative assessments prevail in the perceptions of the other: the other is mainly perceived as a person who poses a threat to the self environment and is hostile. Such perceptions of the other are often explained by the activation of the person's defense mechanisms against any unknown and unfamiliar phenomenon. However, from the standpoint of social psychology, the discovery and analysis of modern perceptions of the other, the identification of psychological tools and mechanisms for distinguishing one's environment from others, will make it possible to study the current manifestations and tendencies of the formation of a person's socio-psychological identity. This article discusses theoretical approaches to the issue of the perception of the other, as well as presents a new author's method: "The Other's Value Assessment Scale", which aims to identify the specifics of the other's situational and descriptive perceptions.

Keywords: perception of the other, situational scale of the other assessment, descriptive scale of the other assessment, culture, values

INTRODUCTION

The perception of the other is related to the problems of cross-cultural psychology, as well as to the process of acculturation and the tendencies of stereotype formation. The cross-cultural perspective of the perception of the other has been developed by many authors who have emphasized cultural conditions to understand their influence on modern perceptions of self and the other. Cultural and psychological backgrounds of these perceptions refer to the field of interactions and rules of behavior between different social groups. The article discusses scientific interpretations of the perception of the other and their developmental tendencies.

LITERATURE REVIEW

A cultural and social context of the perception of the stranger was presented by Klüver (1925). A certain limitation of his approach was that the grounds for rejecting or opposing the other were considered to be the same cultural conditions. The thesis was put forward according to which cultural differences are decisive in the process of interpersonal communication. Of course, such a distanced view of the perception of the other is explained by the nationalist tendencies characteristic of the second half of the 20th century and the still weak influence of globalization. We should also note the strictly empirical nature of the research conducted in the second half of the 20th century and the beginning of the 21st century, as a result of which the emphasis was not on revealing the reasons for the perception of the other, but on the correlational analysis of the relationships between locals and migrants in a given society (Berline, 1960; McGraw-Hill et al., 2011).

A great contribution to the perception of the other was made by Schwartz (2012), who not only addressed the ideas and stereotypes of the stranger or alien but also discussed the peculiarities of adaptation and socio-psychological integration of the other. The idea of the interrelationship of the psychological phenomena of the perception of the other and the identification of the person was put forward. It became clear that the ideas about the others are formed based on the ideas about one's cultural identification. The unknown person, the stranger, or alien is defined and understood to the extent that they are not perceived as phenomena belonging to the native culture. Therefore, the nature of communication, duration, and communicative distance play a major role in the process of perceiving the other. The more common views and ideas there are between the communicating subjects, the more the communicators are perceived as carriers of the same culture. From this perspective, Kluckhohn's (1951) concept of value characterization is important, according to which values, secretly or openly, characterize the individual and the social group, as well as determine behavior and social norms.

From the perspective of the perception of the other, an important methodological concept has been formed in connection with the study of specific situations. Many authors believe that the perception of the other, based on certain values, appears in specific situations (McAdams, 1994; Diken, 1998; Schutz, 1944; Sandstrom, 2022; Kononov and Ein-Gar, 2023). The basis of this theoretical approach was the

methodology of operationalization, according to which perceptions are formed as a result of observations, which, in turn, means that perceptions can be created during the observation of specific cases. Such an opinion was expressed in the works of Kluckhohn (1951), McAdams (1994). However, this point of view was subjected to some criticism by Rokeach (1973), Maio and Olson (2000), who confirmed the idea that values are not only created in specific situations, but also perceptions, when a person forms a framework of desired values and strives to achieve or correspond to them.

The perception of the other also developed similarly: the other was no longer just a new person in some environment, whom no one did not know, but also any stranger who differs from one's concept of identification, whom one could imagine and oppose. In other words, the other "participates" in the process of identification of a person - the greater the contrast between one's own and foreign or alien cultures, the more definite the framework of identification of one's environment becomes, the more understandable it becomes who are "us" and who are "them." The other today is perceived not only as a real stranger, but also as a descriptive concept that is not only abstract, but also part of the value system of a person.

METHODS

Within the framework of the socio-psychological research on the problem of the other perception, we have chosen assessment and rating methods, the purpose of which was to identify the situational and conceptual levels of the other perception. The diagnosis of these two levels of assessment is important not only for the study of specific social interactions but also for characterizing and understanding the deeper conceptual domains of the identification of individuals and social groups (Simoneli & Parolin, 2016). Therefore, we have developed The Other Value Assessment Scale.

For its approval, an experimental study was organized among people aged 20-40 (female respondents, N=60, male respondents, N=60). The scale consists of two groups of questions: the Other's Situational Assessment Scale and the Other's Descriptive Assessment Scale. The results of the study are presented below. The methodological basis for developing the scale is our theoretical position that the attitude towards and assessment of the others is carried out both at the conceptual, stereotypical level and in specific situations. Although these two levels of assessment may be mutually dependent, the diagnostic tool for the situational and descriptive levels of other perception will allow us to clarify the psychological mechanisms of the formation of stereotypes towards the others, the separation of one's own environment from them, and the formation of attitudes and behavioral models towards the others. The internal consistency of the statements was verified statistically: the Cronbach's alpha coefficient for the situational scale was 0.798, and for the descriptive scale - 0.821. Respondents were asked to rate the statements for each of the scales on a 10-point scale, in which

scores from 1 to 3 points meant a low level of assessment or agreement of the respondent with the statements. Scores from 4 to 6 points, respectively, were interpreted as average, and scores from 7 to 10 points meant a high level of assessment or agreement with the statements. For a qualitative interpretation of the obtained scores, we applied the method of analysis of key assessment indicators, within the framework of which we calculated the percentage of respondents' answers expressing a high degree of agreement with these statements. Thus, the following research results are based on the analysis of the percentage of high scores, as key indicators, for each of the statements. Statistical analysis was performed using software JASP 0.17.3.0.

RESULTS

Based on the results of the experimental study, we present the situational assessment scale of the other and the obtained percentage indicators (Table 1):

Table 1. Situational scale of the perception of the other, percentage variables

Statements	Men	Women
I consider the other to the person who betrayed me.	84	70
I consider the other to the person who disagrees with my opinion.	43	87
At work, I am surrounded by the others.	67	32
The people at the concert are not strangers; I just don't know them.	79	78
The people on public transport are not others; I just don't know them.	75	79
If I don't talk to someone for a long time, they become strangers to me.	55	89
During an argument, the other tends to ignore me rather than argue.	76	71

As we can see from the percentage data presented in Table 1, the perception of the other in the situational assessment scale is closely tied with a person's communication skills. This tendency is more pronounced among female respondents, who, compared to men, rated the statements that refer to the low level of communication with a stranger higher.

Now, let us present the percentages of the descriptive block of the other assessment scale (Table 2).

Table 2. Descriptive scale of the other perception, percentage variables

Statements	Men	Women
The other is not like me.	72	85
The other can never understand me.	70	90
The other does not understand my culture and norms.	88	85
If I do not exist, there will be no others.	92	88
The others always strive to assimilate our culture and customs.	84	87
I understand the other better than he understands me.	83	79
The other is my enemy.	77	79

The descriptive scale of the other perception presented in Table 2 differed slightly from the situational assessment scale. First, it should be noted that the results of the descriptive assessment were higher than the percentage variables of the situational assessment. It should also be noted that in the case of the descriptive assessment, the responses of women and men were almost indistinguishable from each other, while the situational assessment showed a higher level of responses of women compared to men. The responses of women differed, especially in those statements that related to the communicative sphere of the person.

DISCUSSION

Research on the perception of the other shows that, although the ideas about the others are characterized by great diversity, the need to study the phenomenon of the other, to develop

methodologies aimed at identifying and assessing perceptions of the others is increasing in modern psychological science (Xu, Yunhong, 2023; Ho, 2011; Kearney, Semonovitch, 2011). This trend is certainly due to modern globalization and civilizational processes, as a result of which people in their everyday life more often communicate with the others. The image of the other, as noted by Schwartz (2012), has become an integral part of a person's worldview and perceptions. However, it should be noted that, as Sandstrom, Boothby and Cooney (2022) emphasized, the frequency and intensity of contacts with the others do not lead to the adaptation of strangers within a given society. Complex, socio-psychological processes are necessary for the activation of adaptation processes, which imply not only certain commonalities in communication, but also in the value system, attitudes, historical memory and thinking. Therefore, attitudes and perceptions about the others can be different, depending on whether we are talking about abstract, descriptive perceptions of strangers or perceptions formed in the real communicative field. As our research showed, perceptions about the others also differ by gender. As can be seen in the table below (Table 3), according to the descriptive statistical method, the average indicators of descriptive assessment almost do not differ between women and men. In situational assessments, women's responses are more emphasized compared to men. However, the relatively lower level of situational assessments is also evidence that before live contact, strangers are perceived from a more positive perspective, and vice versa, during communication, tendencies to protect and distance themselves from the others appear, which significantly affect situational assessments.

Table 3. Descriptive Statistics Data

	Descriptive assessment scale, women	Descriptive assessment scale, men	Situational assessment scale, women	Situational assessment scale, men
Valid	120	120	120	120
Missing	0	0	0	0
Mean	7.433	6.942	6.050	4.450
Std. Deviation	1.364	1.463	1.136	1.194
Minimum	4.000	5.000	4.000	2.000
Maximum	9.000	9.000	8.000	7.000