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**SPECIFICITY OF SOCIAL IDENTITY OF ALL-GIRLS BOARDING  
SCHOOL ADOLESCENTS**

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***Abstract***

The article emphasizes the importance of studying the institutional diversity of patterns of socialization in the context of modern multicultural transitive society, with a focus on adolescence as a sensitive period for the formation of social identity and the achievement of a healthy balance between socialization and individualization. Results of an empirical study of the social identity of 13–15-year-old girls living and studying at Moscow All-Girls Boarding School of the Ministry of Defense of the Russian Federation are presented. The data obtained show that the adolescent respondents have a very strong social identity that is usually associated with pseudo-identity or hyper-identity and can be indicative of a desire to achieve one's goals by any means, as well as a strong positive self-image not always associated with maintaining trust-based and flexible relationships with others. A study on the self-concept of female adolescents showed a high degree of differentiation of their ideas of oneself, with reflexive and social-oriented self-descriptions being prevalent. The most important values indicated by the respondents are independence, hedonism and achievement, with conformity, power and tradition indicated as the least important. The authors conclude that the educational environment of a boarding school, as compared to that of a day school, provides more opportunities for students to socialize, which results in a higher inter-individual diversity of socialization, as well as a more adequate self-esteem of the respondents and a greater coherence of their value perceptions and real-life behavior.

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**Keywords:** Social identity, self-esteem, personal values, adolescents, teenagers, all-girls boarding school.



## 1. Introduction

In today's world many people find themselves in difficult and ambiguous situations requiring them to make conscious and adequate decisions. Major social changes emerge rapidly and irregularly, which can be seen at all levels of the social system. Socialization, as a process of engaging in social interactions allowing an individual to feel relatively safe (mostly due to acceptance by others and due to the boundaries set on others' bad behavior) and providing opportunities for self-expression and self-realization, is now undergoing significant change due to the transitive nature of modern society as a whole. The changing value perceptions, being one of the main characteristics of a transitive society, are more clearly seen in the younger generation and young people who find it hard to get a sense of meaning in life and choose the right role-models and norms of behavior. At the same time, children and young people take the reality of transitive society as a customary context in which they mature and socialize.

Social identity refers to the individual perceptions of one's membership in a social class or group associated with certain norms, roles and statuses (Schneider & Khrustaleva, 2014). It is this kind of identity that allows a person to study oneself through the prism of relationships with others, to realize one's uniqueness and originality. In this context, understanding social identities in teenagers experiencing the so-called crisis of adolescence is a very important task for school psychologists and teachers.

## 2. Problem Statement

Researchers have defined the following types or aspects of identity: personal which is based on the perception of one's uniqueness, and social which is based on the perceptions of one's social environment (Ageyev & Tolmasova, 2000; Antonova, 2000; Baranova, 2000; Tajfel, 1982; Yadov, 2000; Erikson, 1968). Depending on the methodological approach chosen, the significance of personal or social aspects of identity is emphasized, and the question of their interrelation is solved.

Apart from the personal and social types of identity, researchers have identified its other types: ethnic, cultural, sociocultural, professional, linguistic, civil, informational (Martsinkovskaya & Kiseleva, 2017; Schneider & Khrustaleva, 2014; Belinskaya, 2018; Asmolov, 2007). According to Martsinkovskaya, to study the different aspects of identity it is very important to identify the types of social capital used by individuals to be connected as a social group, e.g. linking (i.e. uniting individuals within a social group, helping them to achieve one's set goals and identify oneself with the others within the group) or bonding (underlying trust-based communication, interaction and information exchange among individuals belonging to different social groups) social capital (Martsinkovskaya & Kiseleva, 2017).

Exploring the concept of identity, researchers have identified its structural components (elements): values, goals, beliefs (Erikson, 1968); needs, abilities, beliefs, individual history. It has also been noted that identity formation is not an act, nor is it a linear process. That means that identity crisis is quite possible to occur even if the identity is fully formed (Vatterman, 1982; Matteson, 1975; Coleman, 1974). The sources of identity formation are the processes of finding solutions to the central problems faced at each stage of life (Erikson, 1968), or of subjective social group identification (Shpet, 1996).

Social identity manifests itself as being aware of one's membership in a group of individuals and the surrounding community, with a certain degree of identification-differentiation with the world and others, which is expressed in cognitive-emotional-behavioral self-descriptions (Schneider & Khrustaleva, 2014). Based on the assumption that in the process of social development individualization and socialization necessarily imply each other (Feldstein, 2013), it is obvious that an individual can achieve a high level of self-determination and expect to be accepted by others only if he or she is "socially valuable and individually expressed" (Maksimova & Ryabova, 2018).

### **3. Research Questions**

- Many studies emphasize the importance of the process of socialization-individualization in adolescence (Martsinkovskaya & Kiseleva, 2017; Schneider & Khrustaleva, 2014; Feldstein, 2013; Belinskaya, 2018). It is generally recognized that in the development of social identity at the initial stage of its formation, the external factors such as family and educational environment are most impactful.

- In the complex multidimensional process of social self-determination, a false social identity can be formed in cases where it is based on one's own hyper-original personality or egocentric ambitious aspirations, desire to be a member of an elitist group, overrated expectations from other individuals and groups. In these cases, the internal resources of social identity remain untapped; the entire emphasis is placed on the external aspects of one's behavior (Schneider & Khrustaleva, 2014). These provisions helped us identify the research questions for our study: what is the impact of an educational environment (all-girls boarding school) on the formation of social identity of female adolescents and what is the specificity of social identities in a homogeneous group of students in closed educational institutions?

### **4. Purpose of the Study**

The study aims to determine the characteristics of the social identity of female adolescents living and studying at an all-girls boarding school. We suggested that the educational environment of this type contributes to greater socialization of students, intensity in the distribution of patterns and options for socialization, consistency of value representations of adolescents with real social behavior, adequacy of self-esteem, compensating for hyper socialization mechanism can be the growth of "Reflexive Self", providing a socialization-individualization balance.

### **5. Research Methods**

#### **5.1. Selection**

The study involved 110 girls aged 13-15-years. The respondents are girls from the All-Girls Boarding school of the Ministry of Defense of Russia. Most of them are the daughters of Russian military officers from distant military garrisons, including those from incomplete and large families, the daughters of dead servicemen and combatants who have been awarded with the state awards for the fulfillment of military duty. The study was conducted in 2018 in Moscow.

## 5.2. Survey Methods

To study the standards and readiness of the individual to act as a member of the group, the method of studying social identity (Schneider & Khrustaleva, 2014). The technique makes it possible to reveal the readiness of an individual to share social norms and rules, to be involved and interested in group processes. This component is a generalized indicator of the social identity. An associative test consists of social and antisocial incentive words; the procedure is to select from this list the words that are most attractive and relevant for the respondent. We determined the type and level of social identity, the degree of readiness to accept general requirements, rules and norms of behavior.

For the study of self-image, the method “Who am I?” was used (Kuhn & McPartland; as modified by Rumyantseva, 2006). The question “Who am I?” is directly related to a person’s self-perception, that is, to his self-image. The scale of the analysis of identification characteristics includes 24 indicators, which, combined, form seven generalized indicators-components of self-identity: “Social Self”, “Communicative Self”, “Financial Self”, “Physical Self”, “Active Self”, “Perspective Self” and “Reflexive Self”. When studying the defining characteristics of the identity of an individual, a number reflecting the total number of indicators of identity used by the respondent during self-identification is used as a quantitative assessment of the level of differentiation of identity.

For the study the sphere of values, a method of studying the values of the personality was used (Smith & Schwartz, 1997; Schwartz & Bardi, 2001). The technique represents a scale designed to measure the significance of ten types of values. The questionnaire consists of two parts, different in procedure. The first part of the questionnaire - “The review of Values” - provides an opportunity to study normative ideals, personal values at the level of beliefs, as well as the structure of values that has the greatest impact on the person as a whole, but doesn’t always manifest itself in real social behavior. The second part of the questionnaire - “Personality Profile” - studies values at the level of behavior. The difference in indicators according to the types of values in these two parts of the questionnaire, which characterizes two levels of functioning of values, reflects the value pressure, which is carried out through socialization and through reference group and traditions.

To identify self-assessment, a method of personality self-assessment was applied (Budassi; as modified by Nikireev, 2007). The basis of this technique is the Ranking method. The level of self-esteem and its adequacy are defined as a relationship between the Ideal-I and the Real-I. The one who in reality achieves the characteristics that correspond to the ideal will have high self-esteem. If the respondent “effectively” reflects the gap between these characteristics and the reality of her achievements, her self-esteem is likely to be low. The adequacy of self-esteem expresses the degree of compliance of a person’s ideas about himself with the objective grounds of these ideas. The level of self-esteem expresses the degree of real and ideal, or desired, ideas about self. Adequate self-esteem (with a tendency to overestimation) can be equated to a positive attitude towards oneself, to self-respect, acceptance of oneself, and a sense of one’s own usefulness. Low self-esteem (with a tendency to underestimation), on the contrary, may be associated with a negative attitude towards self, lack of self-acceptance, a sense of inferiority.

To study the experiences of the social role of the student, we used the method of diagnosing the motivation and emotional attitude for learning (as cited in Prihozhan, 2007). The technique is aimed at

studying the levels of cognitive activity, anxiety and anger, as actual states and as personality traits. As a result of processing the obtained data, the following levels of learning motivation are distinguished: Level I - productive motivation with a pronounced predominance of cognitive learning motivation and a positive emotional attitude towards it; Level II - productive motivation, positive attitude to learning, compliance with social standards; Level III - the average level with a slightly reduced cognitive motivation; Level IV - reduced motivation, the experience of "school boredom", a negative emotional attitude to learning; Level V - a sharply negative attitude towards learning.

In collecting empirical data, electronic versions of questionnaires were used that were made in the Microsoft Office software package, which significantly reduced the time spent on collecting and processing data per respondent compared to traditional methods of presenting stimulus material on paper. The collected data were statistically processed and analyzed. The results were processed using the statistical package SPSS22.0 and MSExcel2010.

## **6. Findings**

The obtained results are as follows.

### **6.1. The methods of studying social identity**

The analysis of the choices made by the girls shows their preferences. Thus, the number of stimulus words with high indices (over 80) included: "Conscience" (80), "Understanding" (87), "Society" (87), "Help" (88), "Communication" (92), "Justice" (92), "Love" (93), "Friendship" (96), "Life" (96). Such priorities indicate a pronounced social orientation and moral ideals of the participants.

The average values on the "Social orientation" scale were 17.97, on the "Antisocial orientation" scale - 5.54, which also indicates the prevalence of social orientation among adolescent girls. The correlation analysis of the results obtained when the results were distributed according to the method of studying social identity test showed that there is a moderate feedback between the "Social orientation" and "Antisocial orientation" scales in the studied group ( $r=-0.305$ ).

A study of the social identity of schoolgirls shows that 71% of them surveyed have a very high level of socialization, which corresponds to pseudo-identity or hyper-identity. One sixth of adolescents participating in diagnostics (17%) have a high level of socialization, which corresponds to a high achieved identity; 12% of girls can be characterized as having the average level of social identity. A low level of social identity hasn't been identified in any student.

The average social index for the entire sample is 0.76. The obtained data corresponds to a very high level of social identity. In this regard, we can assume that students attach great importance to the desire to get accepted into society, to deal with its rules and regulations and to understand their importance to themselves. Such attempts of teenagers lead to an excessive emphasis on their social orientation. In some cases, such hyper-identity can be viewed as a desire to achieve goals by any means with a highly positive assessment of one's own qualities and sometimes through violation of trustful, flexible ties with society.

We associate a high proportion of social hyper-identity and a pronounced tendency towards homogeneity in the distribution of patterns of social identity with the peculiarities of the 24-hours-a-day

educational environment. The main target in making the educational system at the Boarding School is the originality and uniqueness of the Boarding school as a residential organization with permanent residence (except for 3 months per year) of students (female) from 5-th to 11-th form. Over the 10 years of its existence, the Boarding School students have achieved significant success. Girls win in International, All-Russian, All-Army, Moscow Olympiads, contests and festivals; and become winners of the Grant of the President of the Russian Federation.

Constant presence in such a productive environment leads to the activation of social adaptation mechanisms and the formation of an accentuated social identity.

A certain contribution to the formation of hyper socialization could have been made by the fact that the girls have been studying for 4 years according to new educational standard aimed at developing personal and social competences.

## **6.2. “Who am I?” methodology by M. Kuhn, T. McPartland in the modification of T. Rumyantseva**

The average total number of self-descriptions given by teenage-girls who study at the boarding-school exceeds 15 statements, which is interpreted as a very high level of differentiation, which demonstrates such characteristics of group members as sociability, self-confidence, high level of social competence and self-control.

The highest rates were obtained on the scales "Reflexive I" (average self-description - 6.4) and "Social Self" (average self-description - 3.9). Among frequently used self-descriptions of adolescents are the following characteristics of the “Reflexive Self”: intelligent, purposeful, reliable, nice, well-behaved, strong, responsible, responsive, restrained, cheerful, and optimistic. In the group of “Social I”, one of the most common characteristics is such self-description as a schoolgirl of the Boarding school. Almost all girls point out such self-descriptions as: daughter, sister, granddaughter, student, citizen, Russian, resident of Moscow. Almost every fifth pupil (18%) used the phrase “citizen of the Russian Federation”.

The third and fourth positions are equally occupied by “Active Self” and “Physical Self” (average number of self-descriptions 1.7 and 1.5, respectively), which demonstrates girls’ active participation in different kinds of activities, primarily in learning, and the attitude to their appearance.

Girls characterize themselves through the following concepts: student, mathematician, chess-player, chorus-girl, participant of the Olympiad movement, basketball-player, member of the dance team, beautiful, tall, blue-eyed.

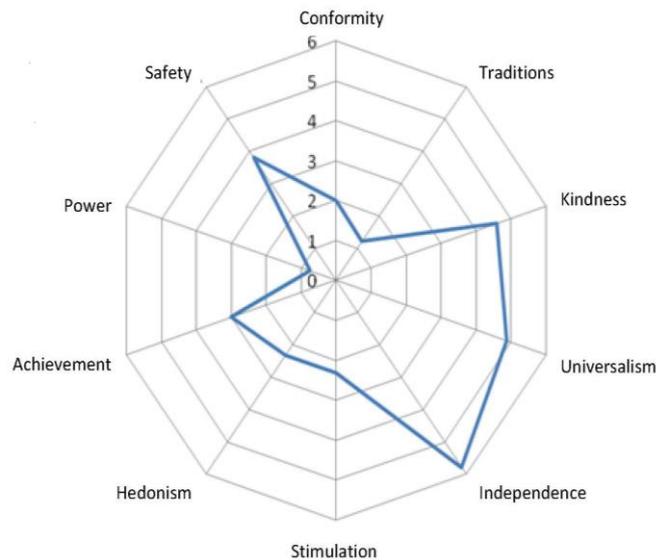
“Communicative Self” is at the 5th position (1.0 self-description). The respondents see themselves as a good speaker, sociable and ready to listen to their friends.

The components of the “Prospective Self” and “Financial Self” are less obvious (the average number of self-descriptions is 0.6 and 0.4, respectively). This may indicate that girls still do not see clear prospects for their future and consider the financial component only from the standpoint of existing material things.

## **6.3. Methods of studying the values of personality by Sh. Schwartz**

For each respondent is made up of individual graphs of the distribution of rank values according to the bipolar axes of measurement. Figure 01 shows the distribution of rank values according to the bipolar

axes of the Respondent no.82. As a result of the analysis of the data obtained in the study of the value sphere of the respondents, it can be concluded that for the respondents of the sample, both at the level of beliefs and at the level of specific actions, the most significant are the values: "Independence", "Hedonism", "Achievements" (positions 1-3 in the ranks of values). The data obtained indicate the importance for the respondents of independence and of the choice of action-methods, the manifestation of self-control and self-government, their own satisfaction, personal success through the manifestation of competence in accordance with social standards.



**Figure 01.** The distribution of rank values according to the bipolar axes of Respondent no.82

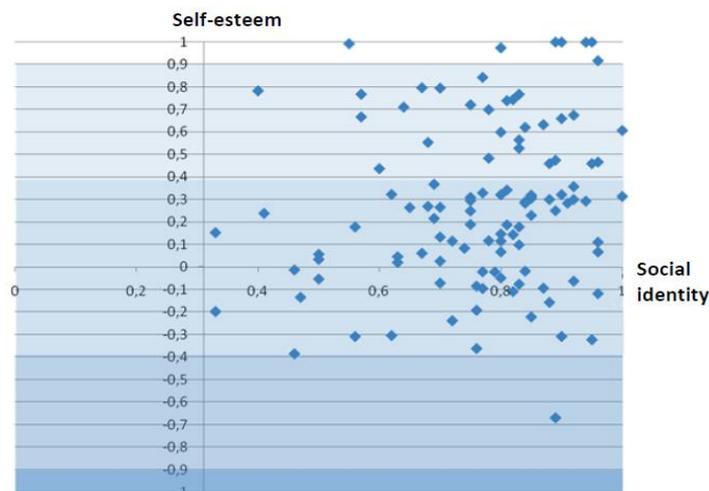
Values such as "Conformity", "Power" and "Tradition" (positions 8-10 in the ranks of values) have the least significance, both at the level of normative ideals and of individual priorities. This suggests that the existing cultural traditions, customs and ideas, as well as vertical models of relations, control and dominance aren't valuable for respondents, which is consistent with the ideas about the specifics of the value sphere in adolescence.

It's worth mentioning the intersection of significant and insignificant value orientations of boarding-schoolgirls at the level of beliefs and specific actions, which indicates the consistency of ideal representations of adolescents with real social behavior.

#### **6.4. Methods of research of self-assessment of the personality**

The study of self-assessment of students allows to make the following conclusions: the majority of pupils have an average adequate self-assessment (69%). Adequate inflated self-esteem is inherent in 24% of adolescents, adequate understated – 1%. Thus, 94% of pupils have adequate self-esteem, and 6% of respondents show inadequately overestimated self-esteem.

Analyzing the graphical representation of the relationship between self-esteem and the level of social identity (MISI), it can be stated that for all levels of identity there're different variants of self-esteem. The most common is a combination of the highest level of identity (0.7-0.9) and adequate self-esteem. Figure 02 shows the distribution of adolescents in the study sample along the axes of self-esteem and social identity measurement.



**Figure 02.** Distribution of respondents according to self-esteem and social identity measurement axes

### 6.5. Methods of diagnostics of motivation of learning and emotional attitude to learning

The obtained results allowed to distinguish several groups of formation of motivation of learning. A little less than half of the respondents (42%) have productive motivation, positive attitude to learning, demonstrate compliance with social standards. Almost a third of the respondents (29%) have an average level of educational motivation with a slightly reduced cognitive motivation. Productive motivation with a pronounced predominance of cognitive motivation of learning and a positive emotional attitude to it is dominant for 13% of Schoolgirls. A slightly smaller number of adolescents (12%) showed reduced motivation, experience of "school boredom", negative emotional attitude to learning. In 4% of respondents a sharply negative attitude to learning is revealed. In our sample there're all five possible levels of motivation and emotional attitude to teaching, which indicate the variability of individual manifestations in the adoption of the educational process and the need for a differentiated approach on the part of teachers to the choice of motivators and facilitators of educational activities of adolescents.

## 7. Conclusion

The study allowed to describe the features of the social identity of teenage-girls living and studying at a boarding school. In addition to the level and type of social identity, associated with the phenomenon studied indicators of self-concept, self-esteem, value preferences, attitudes to the social role of the student were investigated.

Comparing the results of the study with previously published works (Martsinkovskaya & Chumicheva, 2015, Schneider & Khrustaleva, 2014, Khuzeeva, 2016), it can be noted that this group has an expressed specificity of the individual studied indicators. Adolescent girls in boarding institutions have a very high and high predominant level of social identity, rather than the average level of this age group. High and hyperidentities levels as dominant types of social identity are highlighted, not an average achieved one.

According to some indicators (type of social identity, components of self-image, differentiation of self-image), the group demonstrates high homogeneity, that can be associated with a single environment of permanent residence and consistency of pedagogical influence.

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