Dynamic of primary school children’s personal and social identity
Oksana V. Barsukova*, Natalia N. Mozgovaya, Maria A. Vyshkvyrkina, Elena A. Suroedova

*Southern Federal University, Bolshaya Sadovaya st 105/42, Rostov-on-Don, 344006, Russia
b Don State Technical University, Gagarin sq 1, Rostov-on-Don, 344000, Russia

Abstract

This article presents the results of an empirical study on the degree and representation of the personal and social identity of primary school children. Personal identity dominates in first-graders (personal identity - 54.3%; social identity - 45.7%) and second-graders (personal identity - 53.3%; social identity - 46.7%) whereas social identity prevails in third-graders (personal identity - 42.2%; social identity - 57.7%) and fourth-graders (personal identity - 40.7%; social identity - 59.3%).

© 2016 The Authors. Published by Elsevier Ltd.

Keywords: Primary school age; Personal identity; Social identity; Age dynamic of identity; Comparative analysis

* Barsukova O.V. Tel.: +7-903-403-05-58
Email address: knesinka@mail.ru
1. Introduction

The study of personal and social identity age characteristics continues to be relevant for modern psychology, due to the fact that until previously identity was studied not until after adolescence. In addition, another specific feature in identity studies is noteworthy as it focused on either social or personal identity alone or even one single component of social identity [1; 2]. There are few integral studies of social and personal identity [3]. The issue of identity is particularly relevant at the primary school age, when school enrollment gives a child new opportunities for developing his personality, self-comprehension and social relationships [3; 4].

Thus, the relevance of our study is due to, above all, the need to address the following issues specific for the traditional study of identity:
- Study of personal and social identity not individually, but in their aggregate.
- Primary school children are to be the object of study rather than teenagers and adults.
- Empirical study is comparative by nature and it shows the dynamics of personal and social identity in children from grades 1-4 at primary school.

The study aims to identify the age dynamics of personal and social identity among primary school students in grades 1-4. They were primarily the object of our study. The hypothesis of the study is that there are age-related characteristics in the degree and representation of personal and social identity in the self-comprehension of primary school students in grades 1-4:
- The older a primary school student gets, the stronger his social identity is and the less strong his personal identity becomes.
- There are differences in the representation of students’ personal identity characteristics in grades 1-4.
- There are differences in the representation of students’ social identity components in grades 1-4.

2. Method

In our study we used:
- The cross sectional method.
  This method was employed to simultaneously determine and affirm the degree and content of pupils’ personal and social identity in grades 1-4. The study was conducted in the students’ natural environment by their teacher in the day care group.
- The technique “Who am I?” (Manfred Kuhn & Thomas McPartland).
  This test is used to identify the children’s personal and social identity.

The study involved primary school students from Rostov-on-Don. A total of 100 people participated, including 25 first-graders, 25 second-graders, 25 third-graders and 25 fourth-graders.

3. Results and discussion

3.1. Personal and social identity of first-graders

The study of degree of personal and social identity in first-graders allowed us to receive the following results. A total of 184 statements were given including: 100 or 54.3% statements on personal identity; 84 statements, or 45.7% on social identity.

The analysis of the students’ personal identity characteristics revealed the following. In total, there were 100 statements, including:
1. Moral sphere characteristics accounted for 27 statements or 27% (e.g., kind, good).
2. The first and the last names accounted for 19 statements or 19%.
3. Appearance characteristics accounted for 11 statements or 11% (e.g., tall, I have red hair).
4. Abilities and creativity characteristics - 10 statements, or 10% (e.g., a really good painter, singer).
5. Reflective sphere characteristics - 9 statements, or 9% (e.g., favorite, lazy);
6. Emotional sphere characteristics - 8 statements, or 8% (e.g., happy, joyful).
7. Psychomotor sphere characteristics - 9 utterances, or 9% (e.g., strong, a fast runner).
8. Intelligence characteristics - 7 statements, or 7% (e.g., smart, curious).
9. Regulatory sphere characteristics - 2 statements, or 2% (e.g., attentive, patient).

Analysis of the social identity components revealed the following. The 84 statements given concerned the children, including:

1. Family identity - 26 statements, or 30.9% (e.g., son, daughter, grandchild).
2. Students' identity - 20 statements, or 23.8% (e.g., student, first grader, pupil).
3. Gender identity - 18 statements, or 21.4% (e.g., girl, boy).
4. Sphere of interests, hobbies - 10 statements, or 11.9% (e.g., chess player, athlete and craftswoman).
5. Professional identity - 4 statements, or 4.8% (e.g., future director, driver, designer).
6. Friendly relationships - 4 statements, or 4.8% (e.g., friend, girlfriend).
7. Age identity - 2 statements, or 2.4% (e.g., child).

3.2. Second-graders’ personal and social identity

The study of the degree of personal and social identity in second-grade students allowed us to receive the following results. There were a total of 238 statements, including: 127 statements, or 53.3% about personal identity and 111 statements or 46.7% on social identity.

The analysis of personal identity characteristics revealed the following. A total of 127 statements, including:

1. Moral sphere characteristics - 38 statements, or 29.9% (e.g., polite, friendly).
2. Appearance characteristics - 23 statements, or 18.1% (e.g., beautiful, thin).
3. Emotional sphere characteristics - 16 statements, or 12.6% (e.g., joyful, merry fellow).
4. Intelligence characteristics - 12 statements, or 9.4% (e.g., smart).
5. Abilities and creativity characteristics - 12 statements, or 9.4% (e.g., talented, many-sided).
6. Psychomotor sphere characteristics - 9 statements, or 7.1% (e.g., vigorous, athletic).
7. The first and last names - 8 statements, or 6.3%.
8. Reflective sphere characteristics - 8 statements, or 6.3% (e.g., favorite, bold).
9. Communicative sphere characteristics - 1 statement, or 0.8% (e.g., sociable).

Analysis of the social identity components revealed the following. 111 statements were given to the children, including:

1. Sphere of interests, hobbies - 25 statements, or 22.5% (e.g., football player, cyclist, free runner, boxer).
2. Family identity - 26 statements, or 23.5% (e.g., sister, niece).
3. Student's identity - 21 statements, or 18.9% (e.g., excellent pupil, student).
4. Gender identity - 16 statements, or 14.4% (e.g., girl, boy).
5. Professional identity - 12 statements, or 10.8% (e.g., doctor, accountant).
6. Friendly relationships - 6 statements, or 5.4% (e.g., friend).
7. Age identity - 4 statements, or 3.6% (e.g., young, grown up).
8. Ethnic identity - 1 statement, or 0.9% (e.g., Russian).

3.3. Personal and social identity of third-grade students

Study of degree of personal and social identity in third-grade students allowed us to receive the following results. There were a total of 225 statements, including: personal identity - 95 statements, or 42.2%; social identity - 130 statements, or 57.7%.

The analysis of personal identity characteristics revealed the following. A total of 95 statements, including:

1. Abilities and creativity characteristics - 25 statements, or 26.3% (e.g., a very good dancer).
2. Moral sphere characteristics - 15 statements, or 15.7% (e.g., friendly, kind).
3. The first and the last names - 11 statements, or 11.6%.
4. Emotional sphere characteristics - 11 statements, or 11.6% (e.g., sad, joker, funny girl).
5. Intelligence characteristics - 11 statements, or 11.6% (e.g., smart, scientist).
6. Reflective sphere characteristics - 9 statements, or 9.5% (e.g., lucky).
7. Appearance characteristics - 7 statements, or 7.4% (e.g., handsome, small stature).
8. Psychomotor sphere characteristics - 5 statements, or 5.3% (e.g., strong, fast).
9. Regulatory sphere characteristics - 1 statement, or 1.1% (e.g., patient).

Analysis of the social identity components revealed the following. 130 statements were given to the children, including:
1. Sphere of interests, hobbies - 31 statements, or 23.8% (e.g., car collector, gymnast, swimmer, crop grower).
2. Family identity - 25 statements, or 19.2% (e.g., brother, future father).
3. Student's identity - 24 statements, or 18.5% (e.g., classmate, good student).
4. Gender identity - 17 statements, or 13.1% (e.g., boy, girl).
5. Friendly relationships - 14 statements, or 10.8% (e.g., friend of friends, girlfriend).
6. Professional identity - 12 statements, or 9.2% (e.g., future construction worker, chef, future special forces).
7. Ethnic identity - 6 statements, or 4.6% (e.g., Russian, Englishman).
8. Age identity - 1 statement, or 0.8% (e.g., teenager).

3.4. Personal and social identity of 4th grade students

Study of the degree of personal and social identity among the fourth-grade students allowed us to receive the following results. There were a total of 248 statements, including: personal identity - 101 statements, or 40.7%; social identity - 147 statements, or 59.3%.

The analysis of personal identity characteristics revealed the following. A total of 101, including:
1. Moral sphere characteristics - 24 statements, or 23.5% (e.g., arrogant, affectionate).
2. Abilities and creativity characteristics - 21 statements, or 20.6% (e.g., love to sing).
3. Name and last name - 11 statements, or 10.8%.
4. Appearance characteristics - 11 statements, or 10.8% (e.g., handsome).
5. Reflective sphere characteristics - 10 statements, or 9.8% (e.g., self-confident, lazy).
6. Intelligence characteristics - 9 statements, or 8.8% (e.g., smarter than everyone else, clever, silly).
7. Communicative sphere characteristics - 6 statements, or 5.9% (e.g., sociable).
8. Emotional sphere characteristics - 5 statements, or 4.9% (e.g., smiling, funny).
9. Psychomotor sphere characteristics - 5 statements, or 4.9% (e.g., skillful).

Analysis of the social identity components revealed the following. 147 statements were given to the children, including:
1. Family identity - 38 statements, or 25.9% (e.g., daughter, brother, granddaughter).
2. Student's identity - 34 statements, or 23.1% (e.g., student, teammate, mediocre student).
3. Sphere of interests, hobbies - 22 statements, or 15% (e.g., athlete, golfer, football player and fisherman).
4. Gender identity - 19 statements, or 12.9% (e.g., girl, boy).
5. Professional identity - 13 statements, or 8.8% (e.g., veterinarian, hairdresser, designer).
6. Friendly relationships - 12 statements, or 8.2% (e.g., friend, do not have a lot of friends).
7. Age identity - 5 statements, or 3.4% (e.g., child).
8. Ethnic identity - 4 statements, or 2.7% (e.g., Russian, Armenian).

3.5. Comparative analysis of students' personal and social identity in grades 1-4

Comparative analysis of degree of personal and social identity of students in grades 1-4 revealed the following characteristics:
- Students in grades 1-2 have a stronger personal identity compared to social identity;
- Students in grades 3-4, on the contrary, have stronger social identity as compared to personal identity.

However, differences in the degree of personal and social identity in this sample of students are not statistically significant.

Comparative analysis of the representation of personal identity characteristics in students of grades 1-4 revealed the following characteristics:

- 9 personal identity characteristics are represented in students of grades 1-3: the first and last names, the emotional sphere, the reflective sphere, intelligence, abilities and creativity, the moral sphere, the regulatory sphere, the psychomotor sphere and appearance.

- 9 personal identity characteristics are also represented in students of grades 2 and 4: the first and last names, the emotional sphere, reflective sphere, intelligence, abilities and creativity, moral sphere, communicative sphere, psychomotor sphere and appearance.

- The differences lie in the fact that such characteristics as regulatory sphere are represented in students of 1st and 3rd grades, and communicative sphere in students in grades 2 and 4.

- Degrees of students’ personal identity characteristics in grades 1-4 vary:
- First graders have strong characteristics of the moral sphere and their name.
- Second graders have characteristics of the moral sphere and appearance.
- Third graders have abilities and creativity characteristics and moral sphere characteristics.
- Fourth graders have moral sphere characteristics and abilities and creativity characteristics.

Statistically significant differences were observed only in indicators of the characteristics of "intellectual sphere" (with $\chi^2_{\text{observation}} = 10.68 > \chi^2_{\text{table}} = 9.23$ with $\alpha = 0.1$). This characteristic is less represented in first graders and more in fourth graders. As for other indicators, even though there are some differences, they are not statistically significant.

Comparative analysis of the representation of students’ social identity components in grades 1-4 revealed the following characteristics:

- 7 social identity components are represented in first graders: age identity, gender identity, student’s identity, family identity, professional identity, friendly relationships, sphere of interests, hobbies.

- 8 social identity components are represented in students in grades 2-4, ethnic identity is added to the existing components.

Degree of social identity components from different grades varies:
- First graders have strong family, student and gender identity.
- Second graders have family identity, sphere of interests and student's identity.
- Third graders have a sphere of interests, student’s and family identity.
- Fourth graders have family and student's identity.

The statistical analysis showed that there are statistically significant differences in the indicators of professional identity (with $\chi^2_{\text{observation}} = 26.47 > \chi^2_{\text{table}} = 21.68$ with $\alpha = 0.01$). This component is the least represented in first graders and equal in students of grades 2-4. According to other indicators of social identity components, no differences were identified.

4. Conclusion

Personal identity dominates in the first-graders. 9 characteristics of personal identity are represented, dominated by moral characteristics and names. 7 social identity components are represented, dominated by family, student’s and gender identity.

Personal identity dominates in the second grade students. 9 characteristics of personal identity are represented, dominated by moral characteristics and appearance characteristics. 8 social identity components are represented, dominated by family identity, sphere of interests and student’s identity.
Social identity dominates in 3rd grade students. 9 characteristics of personal identity are represented, dominated by abilities and creativity characteristics and moral sphere characteristics. 8 social identity components are represented, dominated by the sphere of interests, family and student's identity.

Social identity dominates in 4th grade students. 9 characteristics of personal identity are represented, dominated by moral sphere characteristics and abilities and creativity characteristics. 8 social identity components are represented, dominated by family and student's identity.

One can observe the following dynamics in the degree of personal and social identity: personal identity dominates in first-grade and second-grade grade students and social identity – third- and fourth-grade students. Even though these differences exist, they are not statistically significant. Thus, the hypothesis that the older a primary school student gets, the stronger his social identity becomes and the less strong his personal identity is was not borne out.

9 personal identity characteristics were represented in students of each grade. At the same time all the primary school students have strong moral sphere characteristics. Statistically significant differences were found in the representation of such characteristics of personal identity as intelligence - this characteristic is represented in 1st grade students and more in fourth-grade students. Thus, the hypothesis that there are differences in the representation of students' personal identity characteristics in grades 1-4 was partially confirmed.

7 social identity components (grade 1) and 8 components (grades 2-4) are represented in primary school students. At the same time, family identity and student's identity are the most represented in all the primary school students. Statistically significant differences were found only for one component - professional identity, which is represented the least of all in first graders and in fact is equal to that of students in grades 2-4. Thus, the hypothesis that there are differences in the representation of social identity components in students of grades 1-4 was partially confirmed.

References


