

# Egocentrism and Development of Students Identity (On the Example of Studying of Future Teachers)

Chulpan R. Gromova  
*Kazan (Volga region) Federal University, RUSSIA*  
Akmatali Alimbekov  
*Kyrgyz Turkish Manas University, KYRGYZSTAN*

•Received 27 May 2015 •Revised 25 July 2015 •Accepted 27 July 2015

Relevance of the studied problem is that the nature of interrelation between an index of an egocentrism and characteristics of identity isn't studied. Secondly, special trainings of decentration for students - future teachers are not developed. The article is directed to study the structure of the first-third year students' identity, connection between an index of egocentrism and characteristics of identity. The leading method of research of this problem is projective methods (Kuna-Makpartlend's method "Who I am?", the projective test of egocentric associations), allowing to reveal the levels of an egocentrism and structure of identity. On the basis of theoretical research the place of identity, an egocentrism in structure of identity is revealed. In the article comparative research results of the personal identity structure of the first-third year students - future teachers are given. During empirical research differences in structure of identification characteristics of students of different courses are revealed. The conducted research allowed to reveal a number of contradictions in structure of identity, in manifestations of egocentrism of the modern student. These contradictions should be considered at the organization of educational process. The connection between an index of an egocentrism and characteristics of identity was found. According to a study results the program of the psychological and pedagogical practical work aimed at the development of role flexibility, ability to self-control was developed. Approbation results of this practical work were generalized. Materials of article can be useful for development of psychological and pedagogical practical trainings, because ability to flexibly react, to consider positions of other people is very important competence for many professions.

*Keywords:* identity, structure of personal identity, students, egocentrism, decentration, role flexibility

## INTRODUCTION

The concept of personal identity is actively developed in modern psychology. Identity at the same time provides feeling of individuality and involvement in society. Identity takes a special place in structure of the personality. In psychological

Correspondence: Chulpan R. Gromova,  
Kazan (Volga region) Federal University, 420008, Kazan, Kremlyovskaya Street, 18,  
RUSSIA  
E-mail: gromovajob@rambler.ru  
doi: 10.12973/ijese.2015.271a

science there are some approaches to identity. Firstly, identity is meant as internal sameness, as continuity of the personality (Erikson, 1968). Secondly, it acts as the protective mechanism from negative feelings, psychological problems (Freud, 1961). Also identity is a kernel of consciousness of the person. It is confirmed by the following approaches to it: identity as to "I-concept" (Muhina, 2002) and as self-determination (Ageev, 1990).

Identity is a dynamic characteristic. It changes during the life process depending on values actual for this age, meanings and depending on public ideals and models of the interpersonal relations. Historically, we can tell about identity as about the psychological phenomenon since the late Middle Ages. At that time personal space appears. Accordingly isolation of yourself as a person, as an identity begins. Psychologically "the person felt itself as part of the whole – of the generation, family, villagers", he didn't make differences between himself and others. Occurrence of identity is, at first, distinguishing of yourself, comparison with others and reference on the basis of comparison to some category.

There are some approaches to definition of identity structure. According to E. Giddens, identity represents two poles: on the one hand, an absolute opportunism (conformism), on the other hand, isolation on yourself. For modern identity the following extremes of identity formation are specific: 1. unification - fragmentation; 2. helplessness - competence; 3. authoritativeness - uncertainty; 4. personal needs - the market individual. He distinguishes the appropriate pathological forms of identity: 1. traditionalism - conformism; 2. omnipotence - estrangement; 3. dogmatism - radical doubt; 4. narcissism - full dissolution in the world of goods (Giddens, 1991).

G. Breakwell considers that the body of the person, a biological organism is a "core", an identity basis, however, over time it becomes its less significant part. Much more importance has substantial dimension. Substantial dimension includes characteristics which the individual uses to describe himself (roles, group membership, values, motives, guidelines, emotions, personal constructs). Substantial characteristics can belong as to a social role (group membership), so as to personal identity (values, motives, installations, emotions, personal constructs) (Breakwell, 1986).

Many authors specify that identity is connected with ideas about the personality, its role in society, personal qualities and position. Today age features of identity, the dynamics of identification characteristics remain not investigated.

Psychological mechanisms of formation of social identity were described, first of all, by cognitive scientists. They distinguished the following mechanisms: comparison, categorization, imitation of model, isolation, integration (Tajfel, 1986, Hogg, 2000, Bennett, 2008).

Amiot C. E., de la Sablonnière R, Terry D. J., Smith J. R. (2007) studied process of social personal identity formation. They distinguished four stages based on a self-categorization of the personality with various ingroups.

The egocentrism is one of the basic concepts in the psychological characteristic of the personal identity. The egocentrism reflects a certain interaction of the person and environment, and also his relation to the world in general which is characterized by concentration of the person on the image of "I" in this world.

The phenomenon of egocentrism for the first time was described in details by J. Piaget in the context of cognitive development in childhood. Piaget J. considered that an egocentrism is the central feature of children's thinking. It disappears during the development of the child, i.e. a decentration takes place (Piaget J., 1969). Today psychologists, psychiatrists acknowledge that the egocentrism is inherent not only to children, but also to adults. For adults the egocentrism is shown in the form of an egocentric orientation of interests and requirements.

Egocentrism is the position of the personality which is characterized by concentration on own feelings, experiences, interests. The egocentrism can also appear as inability to understand and consider information from other people contradicting own experience (to Kavun, 2012). The basis of egocentrism is misunderstanding by the person that existence of other points of view is possible, and also confidence that the psychological organization of other people is identical to his own.

In psychology the egocentrism is considered in various aspects, the following types of it are distinguished:

- informative egocentrism characterizing mainly the processes of perception and thinking;
- moral egocentrism which appears in misunderstanding of the moral bases of other people's behavior;
- communicative egocentrism complicating communication (first of all - speech) by neglecting distinctions of semantic filling of concepts, etc.

The reasons of occurrence of an egocentrism can be:

- wrong methods of family education,
- psychologically intense long conditions (for example, offense)
- individual psychological propensity of the person (character accentuation) (Pashukova, 2001).

In process of personal development the egocentrism is overcome by decentration. To satisfy the growing inquiries, the child should learn to communicate with people around, to agree, make a compromise, to consider a position of others. For adults and teenagers various trainings are developed for overcoming an egocentrism. It is possible to distinguish two types of such psychological trainings: trainings of communicative abilities and trainings of self-control. But special trainings of decentration for students - future teachers are not developed. Their necessity is dictated by that the teacher is a communicative profession. At works of many authors the importance of formation of communicative competences of future teachers is emphasized (Kamalova, Ul'yanitskaya, Zakirova, Masalimova, 2014). That's why to be able to flexibly react, to consider positions of other people is very important competence for this profession.

The problem of research firstly consists of that nature of interrelation between an index of an egocentrism and characteristics of identity isn't studied. Secondly, special trainings of decentration for students - future teachers are not developed.

## **MATERIALS AND METHODS**

Research objectives: 1. comparative studying of identity structure of first and third year students; 2. identification of interrelation between an index of an egocentrism and characteristics of identity; 3. approbation of the psychological and pedagogical practical work aimed to develop the role flexibility, ability to self-control of students - future teachers.

Research methods:

1. Kuhn-Makpartlenda's technique "Who I am?". The test allows to reveal structural components of identity, including the most significant. Examinees in 10 minutes had to give answers to the question relating to them: "Who I am?".
2. Projective test of egocentric associations (EAT). According to the instruction of a technique students had to finish sentences. The number of words wasn't stipulated. Research of an egocentrism by means of the projective test of egocentric associations (EAT) can be carried out both with one examinee, and with the group consisting of 2-7 people. During the

work with group each participant of the test has to be provided with the form, the pen, to take convenient place at a table at distance of 1,5-2 m from neighbors and the experimenter.

Specialty of the task is that examinees shouldn't know a purpose of research. As the "false" purpose can be called a written language speed test or speed determination of emergence of associations. Thus it is important to emphasize that the contents, literacy and calligraphy don't matter. During making the test the experimenter is forbidden to explain something to the examinee besides the instruction and he must not give estimates and to tell the attitude towards examinee's judgments. Here it is necessary to watch for strict identity of the examinee's work and to fix the time of task performance.

Examples of incomplete sentences: "A few years ago...", "Actually...", "In comparison...", "The further...", etc. The technique is directed on detection of such personal quality as an egocentrism. The index of an egocentrism is defined by identification and calculation of the sentences containing information indicating the subject, i.e. examinee. This information is expressed by the pronouns and own pronouns formed from it.

It can be pronouns "I", "me", "mine", etc. The number of sentences with a pronoun "I" is an index of an egocentrism.

3. Methods of mathematical statistics by use of Student's t-criterion, criterion  $\phi^*$  - angular transformation of Fischer, ranging, the correlation analysis, a percentage ratio of data.

Experimental base of research was made by the first - third year students in Institute of psychology and education. The students who took part in research get the education with specialization "Elementary school teacher". The volume of research selection made 250 people.

Research phases. Empirical research is conducted during 2012-2014 and has complex character. In research it is possible to distinguish the following stages.

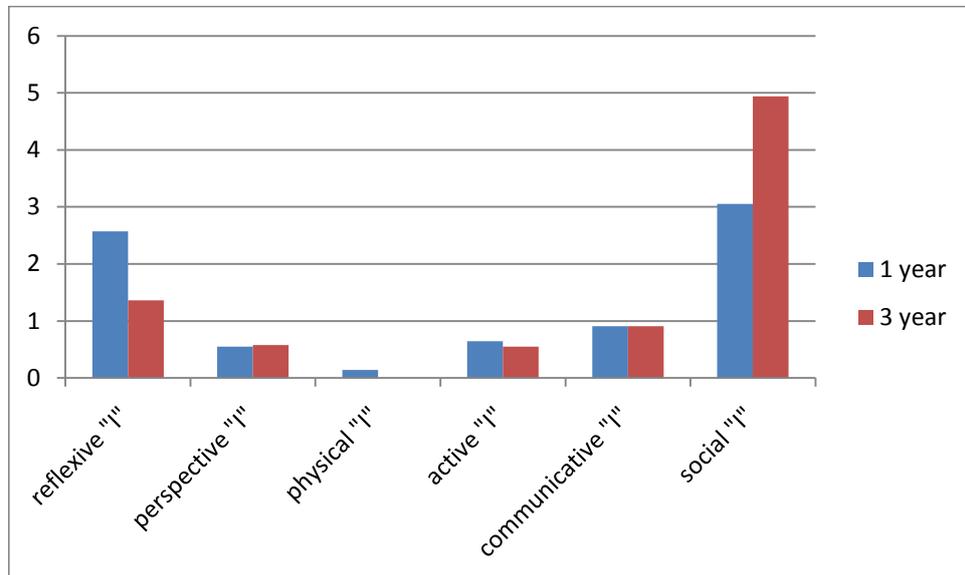
1. At the first stage the structure of identity and sociocultural orientations of the first and third year students was studied.
2. At the second stage the interrelation between manifestations of an egocentrism and characteristics of identity at students was researched.
3. At the third stage of experimental study the psychological and pedagogical practical work aimed to develop the role flexibility, ability to self-control was approved. Results of approbation were generalized.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

In the analysis of identity structure of students the following feature can be noticed: both first-year students and the third-year students first of all designate social "I" (35%) and reflexive "I" (25%). On the third position there is communicative "I" (10%). In answers of respondents active "I" and perspective "I" are represented in a less degree. Among all identification characteristics in this test material and physical "I" of students is almost not presented.

Social "I" of third-year students is more expressed (statistically reliable difference is  $p \geq 0,05$  by Student's criterion). In identification characteristics the family sphere, the sphere of the interpersonal relations are presented more often than study and future profession. 12% of students has expressed educational and professional role position (a student, I study at institute, future teacher etc.). That shows the positive relation to the future profession and the importance of professional education. Rather large number of first-year students designated their social "I". But not all expressions of social "I" were denoted. None of students call his confessional, political affiliation. Only one student noted his ethnicity and regional affiliation. Also students didn't reflect their group affiliation in the answers. Though

almost all students in answers designated family roles and sex. Only 1% of first-year students designated the nationality and religious affiliation. Results of other authors' research also show that students quite neutrally treat public roles [5]. According to research of third-year students it is possible to notice that much more students mark civil, ethnic, confessional identity. Among the third-year students 20% of respondents designated the nationality, 10% - ethnic and confessional affiliation. As a rule, this pertains to academically successful students. The received differences most likely show higher degree of a social maturity of third-year students.



**Figure 1.** Identity structure of the first and third years students

On the second place in the structure of identity there is "reflexive "I". Students designate first of all the personal identity: personal qualities, features of character, description of individual style of behavior; emotional attitude towards themselves. The answers characterizing global existential "I" also belong to reflexive "I": "I am a homo sapiens", "my essence", etc. Reflexive "I" of first-year students is more expressed (statistically reliable difference is  $p \geq 0,05$  by Student's criterion). That shows desire of first-year students to emphasize their identity and originality. Individualism on the one hand is connected with a high individual responsibility. But at the same time it can cause difficulties in implementation of rules, instructions, social roles, group interaction. Having received similar results in the first half of selection, there was a suspicion that it is connected with the influence of discipline "Psychology", because research of students took place after classes on this discipline. Research in the second half of selection was carried out in day when there was no Psychology at all, by other author. Diagnostics showed the similar results. Therefore it is possible to make a conclusion that presence of reflexive identification characteristics in answers of examinees is not situational.

Perhaps, it is connected with a situation of professional and personal self-determination actual for first-year students. Last classes at comprehensive school, and even the first years of studying in institute are marked with choosing of the future professional course. Accordingly the personal reflection actualized. The most part of students gave 8-10 answers. It can testify the middle level of reflection development (introspection). There are few students with the high level of reflection (which gave 15 and more answers).

Communicative "I" has identical expressiveness at students of the first and third years. Students highly enough appreciate friendship, a group of friends,

communication, interaction with people. Similar results are quite natural and typical for examinees of youthful age.

Also active "I" and perspective "I" don't differ on expressiveness. Identification of the "active I" is connected with ability to concentrate on yourself, with restraint, suspension of acts, and also with diplomacy. Students, who designated this identification characteristic, more often mark out the abilities, skills, hobbies which are not connected with study. The presence of active "I" in significant characteristics tells about commitment, responsibility and activity of young people. Professional prospect and family prospect are reflected in the structure of perspective "I" of students. Wishes, intentions, dreams connected with the educational and professional sphere and wishes, intentions, dreams connected with family status (future mother, bride) are more actual for students.

During research any examinee with negative identification characteristics wasn't revealed. All identification indicators are positive. Existence of positive valency can act as a sign of an adaptive condition of identity as it is connected with persistence in achievement of the purpose, with accuracy, responsibility, a business orientation, social courage, activity, self-confidence.

Also any student has not the high level of differentiation of identification characteristics. Generally the low level of differentiation (1-3 indicators) is diagnosed for students. That is students generally call identification characteristics belonging to 2-3 indicators (for example, social or reflexive "I"). Low level of differentiation can indicate identity crisis. Low differentiation of identity is connected with such personal features as insularity, uneasiness, diffidence, difficulties in self-control.

For research of an egocentrism we used a technique "Incomplete offers". Examinees had to continue statements. Level of an egocentrism is defined by number of use of a pronoun "I". Also use of a pronoun "I" in other cases is considered. At this research phase only students of the first and second year took part.

On the average students in the answers used 16 pronouns "I". That proves the average level of manifestation of an egocentrism. First-year students have slightly higher index than second-year students. First-year students used a pronoun "I" on average 19 times, and second-year students – 15 times.

Also there are more people with the high level of egocentrism (10%) among first-year students. High level of egocentrism is concluded when a pronoun "I" is used more than thirty times. Among second-year students such people are less and they make 5%. This fact most likely is connected with that in the first year students are in a stressful situation. The stressful situation is caused by adaptation to a new place of studying, for many also to a new residence. As it is known in crisis situations the level of an egocentrism and stereotype behavior increases (Kavun L. W., 2012).

For studying the interrelation between manifestations of egocentrism and characteristics of identity of students the correlation analysis was used.

Significant correlation connections between the level of egocentrism and number of the answers characterizing reflexive "I" were revealed. Level of correlation made 0,27, for a significance value  $p \leq 0,05$ . Also negative correlation between the level of an egocentrism and differentiation of identification characteristics was found. Level of correlation made  $r = - 0,25$ , for a significance value  $p \leq 0,05$ .

The obtained data prove existence of connection between structural components of identity and an index of an egocentrism. The revealed positive connection between an index of an egocentrism and reflexive "I" can be explained. Personalities inclined to introspection are, as a rule, concentrated on themselves. On the one hand it promotes high responsibility and moral stability. But on the other hand it leads to

excessive "thinking" and centration on himself. That can be the reason of nonflexible behavior, inability to consider requirements and interests of other people.

Negative correlation between the level of an egocentrism and differentiation of identification characteristics shows inflexible reaction of the egocentric persons. If person has the high level of an egocentrism it is difficult for him to look at his personality from the different points of view. Moratorium of the personality is quite narrow.

## **CONCLUSION**

Thus, empirical research showed that there is an interrelation between an index of an egocentrism and characteristics of identity. This interrelation is connected with that the personality with the high level of egocentrism is incapable to reflect the different aspects of his identity in situations of interpersonal communication. This in turn can result inflexibility of behavior.

The conducted research allowed to reveal a number of contradictions. Social "I" by the importance take the first position in the structure of identity of students, but only family and interpersonal roles are presented in it. Reflexive "I" of students has bright expressiveness. Results of other parameters show low and average level of reflection development. By many indicators students are active, energetic, and ambitious. But at the same time insularity, uneasiness, diffidence, difficulties in self-control are diagnosed. The interrelation between an index of an egocentrism and characteristics of identity is revealed. It is difficult for person with the high level of egocentrism to show role flexibility in situations of interpersonal professional communication. Due to results of research the working program of a psychological and pedagogical practical work was developed. This practical work was realized by studying psychological disciplines (the general, social, pedagogical psychology) on the first, second year of training. Realization of a psychological and pedagogical practical work assumed achievement of the following purposes:

- development of the capacity for reflection and self-control;
- development of a positive self-esteem;
- skills of social cooperation, mutual aid;
- development of behavioural flexibility in pedagogical situations.

During realization of a practical work students actively participated in all lessons. They interested in a subject and the content of the lesson. In reflexive reports they point out the changes happening in them. They noted importance of the developed abilities in professional and interpersonal communication.

Materials of article can be interesting for the practicing psychologists, for teachers of psychological and pedagogical disciplines.

## **ACKNOWLEDGMENTS**

The work is performed according to the Russian Government Program of Competitive Growth of Kazan Federal University

## **REFERENCES**

- Ageev, B. C. (1990). Intergroup interaction: social and psychological problems. Moscow, MSU.
- Amiot, C. E., de la Sablonnière, R, Terry, D.J., Smith, J.R. (2007). Integration of Social Identities in the Self: Toward a Cognitive-Developmental Model in Personality and Social Psychology Review, 4.
- Breakwell, G. M. (1986). Coping with threatened identities. New York, Mithuen.
- Erikson, E. (1968). Identity. Youth and Crisis. New York, Atheneum.
- Freud, S. (1961). The Future of one Illusion. New York, Atheneum.

- Giddens, A. (1991). *Modernity and Self-Identity*. Stanford.
- Kamalova, L. A. & Ul'yanitskaya, T.V. (2014) The Study of The Pedagogical Values of The Future Elementary School Teachers. *Life Science Journal*, 11(10s), 522-526.
- Kavun, L. V. (2012) Decentration as the psychological mechanism of development of tolerance of the personality (on the example of students of higher education institution) (Unpublished master's thesis) of University of Novosibirsk, Novosibirsk, Russia. [//http://nauka-pedagogika.com](http://nauka-pedagogika.com).
- Masalimova, A. R. Zakirova, V. G., Chernova Y. A., Drovnikov, A. S., Shaidullina, A. R. & Sakhieva, R. G. (2014). Structure and content of Mentors psychological and pedagogical training curriculum. *Life Science Journal*, 14(11s), 381-386.
- Mukhina B. S. (2015, February 23). Age psychology. Development phenomenology. [http://www.gumer.info/bibliotek\\_Buks/Psihol/muhina/02.php](http://www.gumer.info/bibliotek_Buks/Psihol/muhina/02.php)
- Pashukova, T. I. (2001). *Egocentrism: phenomenology, regularities of formation and correction*. Kirovograd, K: Central Ukrainian publishing house.
- Piaget, J. (1969). *Intelligence psychology*. Moscow, Education.
- Tajfel, H., & Turner, J.C. (1986). *The social identity theory of intergroup behavior in Psychology of intergroup relations*. Chicago,Ch: Nelson-Hall.

