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THE DEGREE OF IDENTIFICATION WITH SOCIAL GROUPS AS AN INDICATOR OF IDENTITY FORMATION OF ADOLESCENTS

Abstract: The research that was aimed to determine the degree of identification with social groups that we comprehend as indicators of identity formation of adolescents, as well as a contribution to the differences in the degree of identification regarding certain factors, was conducted on the sample of 182 students attending the final year of High school – the mathematics – natural sciences profile and linguistics – social sciences profile and Medical school, applying a five-level Liguert’s scale assessment.

Results indicate that examinees show the highest degree of identification with micro-structures - family and peers; representatives of education – school community, sections and clubs, as the structures of egzsystem, have weaker effect, whereas macro-system structures have the weakest effect, with the exception of a significant impact of the nation. Gender of examinees, parental education and type of school they attend contribute to significant differences in the degree of identification with the family, and some of these factors contribute to identification degree with other social groups. Results are discussed within the context of Bronfenbrenner’s theory of bio-ecological system.

Key words: identity, social groups, identification, adolescents.

Introduction

The question of identity and its formation, would involve at least two answers to key questions: Who am I? and Where do I belong? The first issue of identity is linked to the sense of autonomy, while the second question is related to the sense of belonging. Seemingly, these two emotions are in mutual opposition. However, the feeling of

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belonging to a community, which is expressed in social solidarity and connection with others through the network of relationships of trust and mutual system of values, does not necessarily exclude autonomy as the feeling of relative independence, freedom and self-awareness. In other words, belonging to the community, expressed in **social identity** of an individual does not necessarily mean the loss or weakening of **individual** traits, but on the contrary, represents the assumption for the process of personalization (Golubovic, 1999).

The fact is that in the study of identity it is difficult to separate what is personal from what is common. **Social identity** is so entwined in the net of a person's belonging to different groups, so that *I* can hardly be distinguished from *We* (Stojnov, 1999). Many researchers who have studied identity, Allen, Wilder and Atkinson (Allen, Wilder & Atkinson, 1983:94), elicited the nation as the guideline that indicated affiliation with a social group, as the first answer to the question "Who am I?" This leads to the well-known, larger problem of the relationship between **individual** and **collective** in human existence.

For a more complete definition of the human person, it is necessary to take into account the individual, experiential domain, or selfhood - "personal unity that I consider myself to be; my single, inner being" (Ibid. 26). The man also has a reflective essence - Self - that is the sense of what kind of person he is; what he assumes that he is. Person and Self are inextricably linked, because they are one's own experience that he or she exists as a person, as well as the experience of the person that he or she exists as a special, unique person with certain features, embodied in a person. Embodied person is a temporal-spatial center of the Self, or our perception of us. Selfhood, analogous to the private and individual domain of personality, is mostly derived from sources of public and collective domains of a personality. Legitimate complement to the study of public and collective domains, is a private and individual domain of Selfhood. Therefore, the person and the Self represent two concepts that are difficult to be studied separately: in order to know what is "inside" a person, we must know the "inside", that is the person himself. In other words, when a person tries to answer the question "Who am I?" he or she uses information relevant for him or her due to the memory. Gergen and Gergen, 1983 (according to Stojnov, 1994) argue that the result of this process, and the answer to this question that a person gives himself or others, contributes to the story about oneself, or narrative of the Self. During some period, one class of elements of these categories concerning primarily one's relationships with others begins to stand out with its uniqueness and importance.

Term 'identity' is most commonly used to denote this class of elements in self-depiction, and it refers to "the content of what we think we are, which is understandable and potentially acceptable to the public" (Jansz, 1991: 98). In this regard, we can say that centrality, i.e. central part of those units applied to describe a person, is closely related with the issue of identity. The segment of the core structure which is publicly approved and experienced in the same way by most members of a social group (nation, class, culture, profession, etc.) refers to social identity. Generally speaking, a person's location in the network of social relations is determined by person's belonging to different groups

and those characteristics for which he or she assumes to be unique. Therefore, some authors (Hogg & Abrams, 1988) classify elements that make up the Self into two categories: **social identity**, which is derived from belonging to a group, and **personal identity**, which is shaped by unique, personal attributes, which necessarily include one's relationship with people who are significant to him.

Adolescence and identity

According to Erickson, development of personality and the process of identity formation occur through eight successive stages, whereas each of them is of great importance for the formation of a mature personality (Erickson, 1976). In each of them there are developmental crises, which are the result of a temporary disharmony between individual developmental possibilities and demands of the social environment. Erickson emphasizes the developmental aspect of the crisis, since it is stirred by the development, growth and further development are achieved due to it, and harmonization is established at a higher level than the previous one. Erickson interprets developmental crisis in all stages as an attempt to achieve the feeling of wholeness. Wholeness which is achieved in the stage of puberty and adolescence is the sense of **inner identity**. It is a feeling of inner continuity between what the young person is and what he or she wants to be, between what he/she thinks he/she is, and what he/she perceives that others think about him/her and expect of him/her. The relationship of early and new identifications is particularly important for the formation of identity, since identity includes all identifications from childhood, but at the same time it develops and creates a new quality with new identifications, roles, needs, expectations and goals. In this period social support is particularly important, since adolescents gradually make the final choice and take over responsibilities that society expects of them to be taken over.

In this period parents cease to be the only source of security and emotional exchange, the adolescent begins the process of psychological separation from parents and achieves autonomy and seeks emotional support and acceptance out the family: among peers and partners.

The main topic in adolescence is acquisition of autonomy and independence. Regardless of whether the process of acquiring autonomy is the termination of early infantile dependence of parents in order to establish mature heterosexual relationships, as psychoanalysts claim, or the process is marked by change and redefinition of social roles, as social psychologists argue, it still represents one of the most important developmental tasks during this period. The existence of conflict between adolescents and their parents is not only desirable, but necessary, in order to achieve a clear identity (Vranješević, 2001). It is necessary and desirable that the adolescent begins to question the system of beliefs and values that is inherited from parents and to submit it to testing and criticism. What is meant by the adolescent crisis is actually a process in which parental values and early identifications are critically reviewed in order to establish the identity which will not be "taken over" from their parents, as it is the case with people who have so-called exclusive status and who have never undergone through an identity crisis, because they took over all values, without questioning, from their parents. Contrary to the popular belief that

parents are more important as a model in childhood than in adolescence, some research studies show that parents are the most significant models and role models in the period of adolescence, who influence many choices that adolescents make (Coleman & Hendry, 1996).

The transition from childhood to adolescence is marked by important changes in social life: living space is expanded, more roles are at adolescent's disposal than in the past, he has some areas of his life that were not known before, the family ceases to be the only frame of reference. During adolescence young people are faced with new roles, relationships and social situations that require different social skills than the skills they needed at an earlier age. In adopting and mastering these skills, peer group, as a new frame of reference, has crucial role, which is just as important and often more important than the parental. Ruth Benedict is one of the authors who believes that adolescence is a cultural, rather than a biological phenomenon, and in her article "Continuity and discontinuity in cultural conditioning" (Benedict, 1976, according to Vranješević, 2001) suggests the dimension of meaning: *continuity - discontinuity* by which she explains the impact of society and culture on the development of the individual. The discontinuity is due to the different requirements, limitations and expectations that the society has of the individual. Different roles are associated with different behaviors and expectations that society has and discontinuity in development occurs when a person, in order to become an adult, needs to give up the attitudes, values and skills learned in childhood. This means that the roles of adult and child, and expectations of each of them, are contrary. Therefore, R. Benedict concludes that the adolescent crisis is primarily a product of society and culture, as well as of social expectations and the gap that exists between the different roles defines whether adolescence will be a turbulent or relatively peaceful and gradual transition between childhood period and being an adult.

Social groups in the context of Bronfenbrenner's theory

Identification is the most important **process** by which identity is established. There is a common belief that **social groups** transfer desirable models of identification, expressed through: cultural codes, religion, ideology, world perception, customs, morals, group norms etc. Due to the identification with them - the selection criteria, individuals are placed in a social context where they develop a sense of belonging to groups, from **families to nations**.

Golubovic (1999) suggests that the process of identification, as well as transfer and adoption of certain cultural messages by individual members or social groups, is strongly influenced by the type of culture, primarily and most directly, when it comes to personal identity, type of family and its mechanisms of exerting influence on individuals.

In the process of identification, individual performs self-assessment and chooses certain characteristics to constitute their own identity, i.e. oneself as a person. This process does not take place automatically, but the individual must be responsible for this development - which generally does not go smoothly and painlessly. Therefore, it often happens that many people give up halfway and never move from the identification phase to the

process of personalization - "finding oneself" in the material standards and mass conformity. This process is not easy or simple. Therefore, society, social groups and individuals bear great responsibility to create an atmosphere of trust, solidarity and network of social relationships that encourage freedom of choice from the available elements of culture, the ability to act according to one's own conscience, as well as decision-making in the context of individual and collective values and beliefs.

In the attempt to understand the impact of particular social groups on the identity formation of adolescents, we shall review the Bronfenbrenner's theory of bio-ecological system (Bronfenbrenner, 2005). He represents integrationist approach to understanding the relationship of the individual and the environment. His theory observes development within the context of the system of relations which form the environment of the individual, defining a complex of "layers" of the environment, each having more or less significant influence. The interaction between biological maturity, immediate family and social environment and social milieu, stimulates and manages the development. Changes in any of these layers are transmitted and influence other layers. There are four systems of the environment that are intertwined in Bronfenbrenner's theory. These systems are microsystem, mesosystem, egzosystem and macrosystem.

Microsystem is the layer that is closest to the individual, and includes structures with which individual is in direct contact. Microsystem includes connections and interactions that people have with their immediate environment (Berc, 2000, according to Paquette & Ryan, 2001). Structures such as the family, the place (home, school, and workplace), activities, and roles represent immediate surrounding. At this level, relationships have double impact - towards the individual and from the individual. Bronfenbrenner refers to this as bi-direct impact and emphasizes that it can appear in all layers of the environment (Paquette & Ryan, 2001). The interaction between structures within the layer and structure interaction between layers is what is crucial in this theory. At the micro-level, bi-direct effects are the strongest and have the greatest impact on the individual.

Mezsystem is the layer where links between the structures of microsystem are realized (Berc, 2000 according to Paquette & Ryan, 2001).

Egzosystem is a layer that is represented by the major institutions of society, organized or spontaneously made, such as education, the economy, the mass media. The structures in this layer influence the individual through interaction with some structures from its microsystem (Berc, 2000, according to Paquette & Ryan, 2001). The person does not have to be directly involved in this layer, but can feel positive or negative force which can interfere with interactions with the personal system.

Macrosystem is a layer which can be regarded as the outer layer of the environment and it is not particularly limited. It is understood as culture and subculture, which are holders of the system of social values and ideologies. Macrosystem is expressed through laws and rules that characterize individual societies. The effects of macrosystem are reflected through interaction with other layers. Being aware of the risk of reductionism, in this paper we decided to look at different social groups as entities in the process of formation of identity of adolescents. The choice of social groups was not performed by any of

existing classifications, but according to the estimation of the importance of certain social groups in adolescence. Their position is defined in accordance with the theory of Bronfenbrenner (2005), based on the impact of separate social groups on the individual. Therefore, the family, along with the peer group is classified into microsystem, school community, sections and clubs, as the representatives of the education system, belong to egzosystem, whereas sports team, the city and the fellow citizens, religious community, political parties and nation belong to the macrosystem. Religious community is classified into macrosistem (although it belongs to microsystem in Bronfenbrenner's classification), since the cultural differences between the place of origin of this theory and our area have been taken into account.

METHOD

The subject of this paper is to explore the degree of identification with certain social groups that influence the identity formation of adolescents and a research problem is related to the question: Can the degree of identification with social groups be considered as an indicator of identity formation of adolescents?

Research had the following **objectives**:

- To determine the impact of certain social groups on the formation of identity of adolescents due to the degree of identification with these groups
- To determine the differences between the impact of certain social groups on identity formation in relation to factors such as: gender, parental education, academic achievement and the type of school that students (adolescents) attend.

Following **hypotheses** are defined according to these goals:

- Family and peers, as the structures of the microsystem, represent social groups with which adolescents are mostly identified.
- Gender, parental education and type of school that adolescents attend, represent the factors that contribute to differences in the degree of identification with social groups

The research sample

The research was conducted at the beginning of the school year 2013 /14 on the sample of 182 students (52 boys and 130 girls) of final year of secondary school, the mathematics – natural sciences profile of High School (53 students), linguistics – social sciences profile of High School (74 students) and Medical school (54 students) in Loznica. 79 students have excellent academic achievement, 69 students have a very good achievement and 33 students have good achievement. Most fathers and mothers in the sample of the students have a secondary school degree (97 fathers and 107 mothers), college and university degree (77 fathers and 69 mothers), while 7 fathers and 5 mothers have a primary school degree.

Course of research study and measuring instruments

During school hours examinees were given five-level Likert's scale, made by the authors of the study in order to define the level of identification of subjects with certain social groups. Examinees were asked to state their level of agreement on a scale of 1-5 where 1 expresses the lowest level and 5 the highest level of agreement with the above statement such as: "I belong to my family" or "My friends (classmates, peers) represent the group to which I belong." In addition to completing the assessment scale that on average lasted 15 minutes, examinees had to complete the data on gender, academic achievement, profile they attend and education of parents (fathers and mothers separately)

Research variables

Adolescents' identity represents dependent variable of the research, and it is operationalized through: the degree of identification with social groups that were marked as indicators of identity. Gender (male and female), academic achievement (good, very good and excellent), education of parents (fathers and mothers, separately) represent independent variables, which were divided into three groups - primary school education (PSE) secondary education (SSE) and Higher and Bachelor degree (BA) and the type of school the examinees attend (High school - the mathematics – natural sciences profile and linguistics – social sciences profile and Medical school).

Data analysis

In determining the degree of identification with particular groups descriptive statistics methods were applied. Testing of the significance of differences between arithmetic means, regarding gender, academic achievement, parental education and type of school examinees attend, was conducted using MANOVA in SPSS 18.0.

THE RESULTS

1. Degree of identification with social groups that are indicators of identity

According to the calculation of arithmetic means (AM) and standard deviation (SD) the degree of identification with the following social groups was identified: family and peers that according to Bronfenbrenner's theory make the structures of a microsystem, school community, sections and clubs, that belong to egzosistem, favourite sports team, the city and fellow citizens, religious community, political parties, and the nation, as the structures of a macro-system (Table 1).

Table 1. Degree of identification with social groups that influence the identity formation of adolescents

Social groups	Means	Standard Deviation
Family	4,77	0,712
Peers	4,21	1,072

School community	3,24	1,352
Sections and clubs	3,54	1,206
Sports team	3,24	1,528
Political parties	2,31	1,413
Religious community	3,62	1,290
City and fellow citizens	3,08	1,348
Nation	4,55	0,863

The analysis of the values shown in Table 1 shows that the examinees show a high degree of identification with the family ($AM = 4.77$), the nation ($AM = 4.55$) and peers ($AM = 4.21$). Their level of identification with political parties is low ($AM = 2.31$). Adolescents show medium level of identification with the city and fellow citizens ($AM = 3.08$), school community ($AM = 3.24$) and a sports team ($AM = 3.24$), and moderate level in relation to sections and clubs ($AM = 3.54$) and a religious community ($AM = 3.62$).

The results indicate that social groups that were classified into microsystem according to Bronfenbrenner's theory, since they have the most direct effect on the individual, i.e. family and peers, exert a strong influence on the formation of adolescent identity, since they show high level of identification with them. Obtained results emphasize the functions of these social groups in contemporary education and influence they have on young people.

Structures of the macrosystem, or social groups that are defined in the survey, exert different influence on adolescents' identity formation.

The lowest level of identification was found with the political parties, which is consistent with the age characteristics of examinees, who are on their way to gain the right to vote. Medium level of identification with the city and fellow citizens can also be explained by the characteristics of the sample - most of the examinees, choosing a High School, have opted to continue their education outside the place where they live, according to the fact that in their city they do not have such opportunities, and in this period, their identification with the city is of lower degree. Higher degree of identification with a religious community can be explained by the influence of the broader family, educational and social context, whereas we can determine the precise reasons by further analyses, when we would investigate the influence of factors defined in this research on degree of identification with different social groups. Identification of adolescents with nation is very high (at the second position) and indicates that although this social group belongs to the macrosystem which performs indirect impact on the individual, its importance, even in adolescence, should be seriously considered.

According to these findings, we can accept the hypothesis that claims that adolescents mostly identify with social groups that we have classified into microsystem, which indirectly means that the impact of these social groups on the identity formation of adolescents is the strongest.

2. The influence of certain determinants - gender, academic achievement, parental education, school type on differences in the degree of identification

MANOVA was applied in answering the question to the second hypothesis relating to the influence of certain factors on the degree of identification with different social groups and the results are presented in the following tables.

Table 2. The influence of gender on the degree of identification with different social groups

VARIABLE	GENDER	Means	Squares	df	F	P
Family	Male	4.317	9.947 0.215	1 122	46.218	0.000
	Female	4.932				
Peers	Male	3.808	3.892 0.953	1 122	4.083	0.046
	Female	4.205				
School community	Male	3.075	0.509 1.773	1 122	0.287	0.593
	Female	3.219				
Sections and clubs	Male	3.310	0.789 1.272	1 122	0.620	0.433
	Female	3.489				
Sports team	Male	3.423	5.092 2.012	1 122	2.531	0.114
	Female	2.969				
Political parties	Male	2.463	2.992 2.003	1 122	1.494	0.224
	Female	2.115				
	Female	3.710				
Religious community	Male	3.441	1.066 1.598	1 122	0.667	0.416
	Female	3.649				
City and fellow citizens	Male	2.870	0.517 1.752	1 122	0.295	0.588
	Female	3.015				
Nation	Male	4.454	0.276 0.698	1 122	0.395	0.531
	Female	4.560				

The results in Table 2 indicate that gender significantly influences the differences in the identification of examinees with family and friends. Girls significantly more identify with the family than boys ($M = 4.932$, $M = 4.317$, $p < 0.001$) and with friends ($M = 4.205$, $M = 3.808$, $p < 0.05$). The assumption is that the traditional style of upbringing, which directs girls towards taking future family and close friendship roles, is probably more prevalent in families of secondary school students in an urban environment where testing was done. Gender differences in the degree of identification with other social groups have not been identified.

Table 3. Academic achievement and degree of identification with different social groups

DEPENDENT VARIABLES	Academic achievement	Means	Means square	df	F	p
Family	Excellent	4.627	1.108 0.215	2 122	5.149	0.007
	Very good	4.868				

	Good	4.505				
Peers	Excellent	4.206	1.311 0.953	2 122	1.375	0.257
	Very good	3.843				
	Good	4.044				
School community	Excellent	3.184	0.043 1.773	2 122	0.024	0.976
	Very good	3.119				
	Good	3.167				
Sections and clubs	Excellent	3.209	1.335 1.272	2 122	1.050	0.353
	Very good	3.492				
	Good	3.574				
Sports team	Excellent	2.941	1.618 2.012	2 122	0.804	0.450
	Very good	3.268				
	Good	3.328				
Political parties	Excellent	2.199	0.316 2.003	2 122	0.158	0.854
	Very good	2.370				
	Good	2.225				
Religious community	Excellent	3.725	4.325 1.598	2 122	2.707	0.071
	Very good	3.769				
	Good	3.083				
City and fellow citizens	Excellent	3.118	3.194 1.752	2 122	1.823	0.166
	Very good	3.109				
	Good	2.544				
Nation	Excellent	4.532	1.313 0.698	2 122	1.882	0.157
	Very good	4.689				
	Good	4.275				

Academic achievement significantly influences the degree of identification with the family. The highest degree of identification is identified with very good students ($M = 4.93$), and excellent students ($M = 4.75$), and finally the students with good grades ($M = 4.52$). Statistically significant differences at $p < 0.05$, were found between very good students as compared to students with excellent and good grades, whereas between the latter two categories of students there were no differences. If we consider the fact that the sample is dominated by fathers and mothers with secondary education, it can be assumed that the secondary school pupils who have very good success mostly identify with the family and its patterns, because a family model, at least when it comes to

achievement, is familiar to them. Academic achievement of high school students does not contribute to differences in the degree of identification with any other social group.

Table 4. Education of father and degree of identification with different social groups

DEPENDENT VARIABLES	Academic achievement	Means	Means Square	df	F	p
Family	H	4.546	0.860 0.215	2 122	3.995	0.021
	SCC	4.754				
	PCC	5.000				
Peers	H	3.971	1.583 0.953	2 122	1.661	0.194
	SCC	3.992				
	PCC	4.750				
School community	H	3.072	0.568 1.773	2 122	0.321	0.726
	SCC	3.262				
	PCC	2.958				
Sections and clubs	H	3.346	1.238 1.272	2 122	0.974	0.381
	SCC	3.385				
	PCC	4.042				
Sports team	H	2.850	4.622 2.012	2 122	2.297	0.105
	SCC	3.373				
	PCC	3.792				
Political parties	H	2.210	0.629 2.003	2 122	0.314	0.731
	SCC	2.258				
	PCC	2.708				
Religious community	H	0.181	1.784 1.598	2 122	1.117	0.331
	SCC	0.177				
	PCC	0.532				
City and fellow citizens	H	0.189	4.892 1.752	2 122	2.793	0.065
	SCC	0.186				
	PCC	0.557				
Nation	H	0.120	2.887 0.698	2 122	4.138	0.018
	SCC	0.117				
	PCC	0.351				

Father's education significantly contributes to differences in the degree of identification with the family and the nation ($p < 0.05$). If fathers are less educated, the identification with the family and the nation is more prominent. It seems that fathers with lower education are conventional advocates of traditional family model, and they offer the feeling of security to their children and a sense of belonging to a family, which is reflected in the results of the survey. Similarly, lower level of education of fathers probably contributes to a stronger national identity, which is inherited by children.

Table 5. Mother's education and the degree of identification with different social groups

DEPENDENT VARIABLES	Academic achievement	Means	Means Square	df	F	p
Family	H	4.687	2.302 0.215	2 122	10.696	0.000
	SCC	4.789				
	PCC	3.750				
Peers	H	0.150	2.073 0.953	2 122	2.175	0.118
	SCC	0.126				
	PCC	0.457				
School community	H	0.205	2.327 1.773	2 122	1.312	0.273
	SCC	0.172				
	PCC	0.623				
Sections and clubs	H	0.174	2.247 1.272	2 122	1.766	0.175
	SCC	0.145				
	PCC	0.528				
Sports team	H	2.967	2.114 2.012	2 122	1.051	0.353
	SCC	3.234				
	PCC	3.875				
Political parties	H	2.176	1.011 2.033	2 122	0.505	0.605
	SCC	2.260				
	PCC	2.875				
Religious community	H	3.253	3.512 1.598	2 122	2.199	0.115
	SCC	3.780				
	PCC	3.750				
City and fellow citizens	H	2.924	2.050 1.752	2 122	1.170	0.319
	SCC	3.082				
	PCC	2.125				
Nation	H	4.490	0.362 0.698	2 122	0.362	0.697
	SCC	4.567				
	PCC	4.250				

Mother's education significantly contributes to differences in the degree of identification with family and profession. Students whose mothers have secondary school education (AM = 4.789) show the highest degree of identification with the family and secondary school students whose mothers have primary school education show the lowest level of identification (AM = 3.750). It seems that the influence of secondary education of mothers has more influence on identification of their children with the family, than the influence of highly educated mothers on this type of identification. Low education of mother is clearly unpopular identification family model.

Table 6. School type and degree of identification with different social groups

DEPENDENT VARIABLES	School type	Means	Means Square	df	F	p
Family	High School N	4.833	1.287 0.215	2 122	5.981	0.003

	High School S	4.471				
	Medical	4.722				
Peers	High School N	4.233	3.841 0.953	2 122	4.029	0.020
	High School S	3.669				
	Medical	4.223				
School community	High School N	3.615	6.666 1.773	2 122	3.760	0.026
	High School S	2.909				
	Medical	2.822				
Sections and clubs	High School N	3.748	3.858 1.272	2 122	3.033	0.052
	High School S	3.117				
	Medical	3.313				
Sports team	High School N	3.196	3.934 2.012	2 122	1.955	0.146
	High School S	2.854				
	Medical	3.530				
Political parties	High School N	2.077	5.984 2.003	2 122	2.987	0.054
	High School S	2.060				
	Medical	2.809				
Religious community	High School N	3.533	8.948 1.598	2 122	5.601	0.005
	High School S	3.133				
	Medical	4.153				
City and fellow citizens	High School N	3.056	12.064 1.752	2 122	6.886	0.001
	High School S	2.381				
	Medical	3.553				
Nation	High School N	4.337	2.071 0.698	2 122	2.969	0.055
	High School S	4.471				
	Medical	4.824				

The type of school the students attend significantly contributes to differences in the degree of identification with family, peers, school community, religious community, cities and fellow citizens ($p < 0.05$). The examinees who attend mathematics – natural sciences profile of High School show the highest degree of identification with family and peers ($AM = 4.833$ and $AM = 4.233$) examinees who attend Medical school are at the second place, ($AM = 4.722$ and $AM = 4.223$) and the examinees who attend linguistics – social sciences profile of High school are at the third position ($AM = 4,471$ and $AM = 3.669$). These data suggest that high school students who have chosen the mathematics – natural sciences profile of High School probably understood and comprehended their needs and opportunities when choosing the school, and this choice is consistent with family values, since they feel good in contact with their peers who probably have similar characteristics, and it contributes to a significantly higher degree of identification with the school community ($p < 0.05$) compared to high school students who attend linguistics – social sciences profile of High School or Medical school. Adolescents who attend

Medical school identify in higher degree with their family and peers (AM = 4.722 and M = 4.233) compared to adolescents who attend linguistics – social sciences profile of High school, which indicates that they feel accepted within family and peer frames. However, when it comes to the school community, students who attend linguistics – social sciences profile of High school still express a higher level of identification (AM = 2,909) compared to secondary school students who attend Medical school (AM = 2.822), although the differences between the two groups are not statistically significant. This suggests that the linguistics – social sciences profile of High school, i.e. High school as the type of school continues to be socially desirable model for the identification of adolescents and the formation of their identity. Students of Medical school respect the values and norms of the religious community and identify with them (AM =, 4.153) compared to High School students of mathematics – natural sciences profile (AM = 3,533) and linguistics – social sciences profile (AM = 4,471). Since it is known, according to the data gathered during school enrolment, that Medical school is mostly chosen by children from suburban and rural areas, where they are still familiar with religious values, Christian holidays and customs, the obtained results could be interpreted in the context of these data. Through the need for adequate adaptation and the desire to find a job or migration to the city in terms of place of living, the students of Medical school show a significant degree of identification with the city (AM = 3.553) compared to the students of mathematics natural sciences profile (AM = 3.056), and especially of linguistics – social sciences profile of High school (AM = 3,133). Although they do not reach the level of statistical significance, but come close to it ($p = 0.055$), it is important to point out the differences in the degree of identification with the nation, where students of Medical school are at the first place again (AM = 4,824). National identity is less emphasized with pupils of mathematics – natural sciences profile of High School (AM = 4,337), since their identity is more determined through the identification with family, peers and school community. The situation is similar with the identification with political parties (higher degree at the significance level $p = 0.054$ is shown by students of Medical School - AM = 2.808, compared to high school students- AM = 2.077 and AM = 0.060). The fact that there are differences in the degree of identification with the sections and clubs approaching the level of statistical significance ($p = 0.052$), should not be ignored, too. The students of mathematics – natural sciences profile of High School again show the highest level of identification (AM = 3,748), Medical school students are at the second place (AM = 3.313) and students of linguistics – social sciences profile of High school are at the third position (AM = 3,117).

The set hypotheses can be confirmed in part related to the contribution of all factors to differences in the degree of identification with the family. Gender contributes to differences in the degree of identification with peers, father's education with the nation and the type of school they attend with peers, school community, religious community, city and fellow citizens. As far as the contribution of these factors to the differences in the degree of identification with other social groups, is concerned, the set hypothesis is rejected.

CONCLUSION

This research was conducted in order to identify the influence of certain social groups on the formation of identity of one part of high school population in a smaller town, as well as the factors that contribute to differences in the degree of identification with certain social group, which are considered to be significant in adolescence.

The examinees show the highest degree of identification with their families, in their choice there is a need for creating and nurturing national identity (nation), as well as developmentally justified need for identification with peers. Although the influence of peers, as the reference group in adolescence, is very important, the family still keeps primacy. The data clearly indicates that, independently of the changes in the functions of the family, from traditional to contemporary, its role and importance in the formation of identity of young people remains significant. The structures of the micro system- family and peers clearly exert a strong influence on individual development and influence identity formation of adolescents.

The examinees show lower level of identification with educational institutions – school community, sections and clubs. Teachers, as the most important representatives of the school community have, in addition to learning and teaching, an important role in the personality development of adolescents - which is especially important in the social aspect. In this case, low level of identification shows that many teachers are not aware of this role or they do not recognize it as an important for the teaching profession. The teacher's role "means that teachers are patient, they show respect for the students, they are witty, willing to listen and they are interested in personal problems of students" (Vulfolk, Hughes, Volkap, 2014:188). If we consider school community, sections and clubs to be the representatives of the contemporary educational system, and examined adolescents showed lower level of identification with them, we are obliged to examine the way in which these representatives influence the formation of the personality of the young. In the context of the bioecological theory of Bronfenbrenner (2005), the interaction of the structures of egzosystem to which educational institutions belong and microsystem (which includes family and peers) is a necessary precondition for the formation of the individual. Having considered the data of the research, we may say that the structures of egzosystem are in the process of their reevaluation, which warns that in the future these roles should be redefined, in order to establish continuity in the identity formation of young people, or at least of certain subcultures.

The high degree of identification of the sample population of high school students with a nation can be interpreted as a consequence of decades of media influence and insisting on national symbols as a cohesive factor in the years of war and crises.

The survey detected some trends in the identity formation of adolescents, which were not objective *per se*. It appears that the population of parents with secondary education is most appropriate model to identify with some family values in modern society. Young people who attend mathematics – natural sciences profile of High School achieved certain continuity in identity formation since they identify with the structures of

microsystem, as well as with educational institutions as the structures of egzosystem. Family, traditional, religious and ethnic characteristics have the highest influence on students of Medical school, whereas educational institutions have significantly weaker influence. In the end, it seems that identity of students who attend linguistics – social sciences profile of High school is characterized by certain confusion. These students identify more with the structures of microsystem and egzosystem, than with the structures of macrosystem, but significantly less than students of Medical school and students who attend mathematics – natural sciences profile of High school. If we consider the data on previous academic achievement from enrollment registration forms relating to students who have chosen linguistics – social sciences profile of High school, we will notice that among them there are a number of those whose previous academic achievement was not outstanding, as well as the students who did not mark High school as the first choice on their list of preferences. Therefore, the motives that influenced the choice of this type of high school can be discussed. This data points to the importance of reviewing the criteria for choosing this profile in order to prevent possible negative effects on the formation of the personality of these young people.

Since our study represented only the initial step in solving issues of identity formation of adolescents through determining the degree of identification with certain social groups of the population, and included only a sample from one city and two high schools, future research studies should be broadened with qualitative approach to this phenomenon which would be conducted on a larger sample of different social and demographic characteristics.

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