

**SUMMARY**  
**of the dissertation of Boyan Veselinov Vasilev**  
**SELF-AFFIRMATION AND PSYCHOSOCIAL IDENTITY**  
**IN YOUTH**

The dissertation contains a theoretical and empirical study of two psychic phenomena (and their corresponding theoretical constructs), describing and presenting the most essential aspects of personality: psychosocial identity and the pursuit of self-affirmation, considered in their mutual connection and conditionality. One of these phenomena - identity - is widely known in both research and social practice; it is one of the most widely and extensively studied constructs. The other phenomenon and construct - self-affirmation - is too poorly studied, it is almost an unknown problem even for a relatively narrow circle of specialists.

In the theoretical review and analysis, the psychosocial identity is seen as a process of integrating a young person's knowledge of oneself, a complex, sometimes dramatic process of integrating all gradually learned and experienced knowledge of oneself, their ordering and hierarchical organization, selection and highlighting of the important in this knowledge. Both Eric Erikson's classical theory and James Marshia's identity status theory, which serve as the basis for empirical research in the dissertation, are analyzed.

In the analysis of **self-affirmation**, two trends in its study are distinguished. In the American tradition (co-founded by Claude Steele), the phenomenon is interpreted as a defensive reaction and a strategy to preserve the integrity and balance of one's Self in threatening situations by spontaneously highlighting the subject's positive qualities, actions and successes. In the Russian tradition (founder Lydia I. Bozovich and most prominent author Natalia E. Harlamenkova) self-affirmation is a universal rather than a private characteristic of the individual and manifests itself in an effort to maintain high appreciation and self-esteem and corresponding behavior.

Among these incompatible concepts, we choose the interpretation of L. Bozovic and N. Harlamenkova, mainly because of its theoretical alignment with the ideas of the classics of self-affirmation - J. Dewey, Z. Freud, W. James, A. Adler, E. Maslow.

This is the basis of the author's concept of self-affirmation, which traces the development of the phenomenon in the ontogenesis and distinguishes three substantially different qualitative degrees of self-affirmation, which can also serve as an indicator-evaluator of the achievement of a person's personal maturity:

- The lowest level is **self-affirmation through possession**, which is typical of childhood, and at later ages is an indicator of retention in personal development and unattained personal maturity;

- A lower degree of **self-affirmation is through acceptance and approval from others**, which is especially true in teenage years. Self-affirmation through others will be correlated with external motivation, and behavior is autonomous and the subject is susceptible to the influence of others;

- The highest qualitative degree of **self-affirmation is through an autonomous pursuit**

**of successes and achievements**, which the subject considers to be valuable and which also give the subject a sense and awareness of significance and value.

On the last two stages of self-affirmation, an author's test was also designed to investigate the phenomenon, which is a major research tool in the thesis empirical study.

The main part and the first module of the empirical study is filled with two questionnaires. The well-known and authoritative questionnaire for objective measurement of psychosocial identity (OMEIS) by J. Adams and the author's self-affirmation measuring questionnaire. Two samples were examined - the first was upper secondary school students, with an average age of 16, and university students, with an average sample age of 24. The empirical data collected with the tools allow us to study both the peculiarities of each of the phenomena, comparatively between the two samples, and to compare the two phenomena and to look for their correlation and interdependence.

The summarized empirical results allow us to conclude that each of these two phenomena undergoes qualitative development with the age increasing of young people. Psychosocial identity, measured qualitatively through its statuses, is found to be at a higher level of development among older adults - students.

**Self-affirmation, also expressed through its two degrees, develops with age and students have a higher degree of autonomous self-affirmation through achievement and success.**

The central and leading research task was to trace the link between self-affirmation and identity (expressed through its statuses). **Such a link has been empirically established - there is a real correlation between degrees of self-affirmation and identity statuses.**

The basic hypothesis is confirmed in general: a connection and a tendency of interdependence between the two phenomena exists.

Our starting point is that self-affirmation can claim and be accepted as the role of predictor and activator (accelerator) of the complex process of psychosocial identity formation in young people (adolescents) and it received empirical support.

Of course, this fundamental thesis needs further empirical and theoretical verification, and its final confirmation is a task for new researches.