Marijana Markovik, PhD

Associate Professor

"Ss. Cyril and Methodius" University, Institute for Sociological, Political and Juridical Research, Skopje

marijana@isppi.ukim.edu.mk

Eleonora Serafimovska, PhD

Associate Professor

"Ss. Cyril and Methodius" University, Institute for Sociological, Political and Juridical Research, Skopje

eleonora@isppi.ukim.edu.mk

COMPARING MACEDONIAN AND AUSTRIAN STUDENTS' PERCEPTION OF IDENTITY ASPECTS AND COLLECTIVE IDENTITY

Abstract

This research was focused on the association between aspects of identity orientation and collective identity among students in Macedonia and Austria. The survey in Macedonia was conducted among Macedonian and Albanian state university students, and in Austria, it was conducted among students from the Department of Political Science and Sociology at the University of Salzburg. The same methodological procedure was applied: orientation towards two aspects of identity - Personal aspect of Identity (PI) and Social aspect of Identity (SI), measured with the AIQ (Aspect of Identity Orientation) Scale. The collective identity was run through a grid of one scale (according to Laponce): importance was given to each of 13 social groups, such as: family, friends, gender, age, profession, religion, preferred political party, place of birth, residence, university, ethnicity, class, and

citizenship. According to the results on the PI and the SI scales, four groups of respondents were obtained. The first group, termed "Integrated", was the group with high scores on both scales; the second group, termed, "Ego-oriented", had high scores on the PI scale and low scores on the SI scale; the third group, "Pre-defined", presented individuals with low scores on both scales, and the last group, "Over-socialized", was the group that had high scores on the SI scale and low scores on the PI scale. The main topic of research was the importance that each of these four groups (in a Macedonian and Austrian context) assigned to the collective identity. The comparative study underlined some important issues: *family* and *friends* are the first and second most important social groups for the four groups in both samples; in both samples, the "Integrated" group places the highest importance to the collective identity; the collective identity is mostly predominant among the Macedonian students, and, no matter how much personality is integrated, the least important group for the Austrian sample of students is *religion*, while for the Macedonian sample of students - *political party*.

Key words: comparative study, aspects of identity orientation, social groups, non-EU country - Macedonia, EU country - Austria

I. INTRODUCTION

Defining the notions related to the term identity

The term "identity" should be delimited from the following terms: *identification*, *self*, *self-concept,* and *self-esteem* (Baumeister, 1986). The fundamental difference between the notions of *identity* and *identification* is that *identity* refers to the level of *sameness* (i.e. the difference in regard to others) of itself over time, and *identification* refers to the central process of continuous assimilation of properties, the properties of the "other", which leads to complete or partial transformation in accordance with the identification model (Poro, 1990). In psychology, the term *identity* is associated with the *image of oneself* (the mental model that a person has created for himself/herself), the *self-evaluation* and term *individuality* (Weinreich, 1986). Psychologists usually use the term *identity*, referring to *personal identity*, i.e. those aspects which make a person unique (Krstikj, 1991).

Personal identity refers to everything that differentiates a specific person from others as a unique constellation of traits and characteristics that are durable over time. Theoretically, personal identity has two aspects: *personal aspect, private,* and *social aspect, public.* The *private aspect* of *personal identity* is the aspect of what may be "visible" only for the individual and refers to their own needs, thoughts, attitudes, feelings, values and moral standards, goals and expectations, fears, feelings of unity and continuity, and their self-evaluation. The *public aspect* of *personal identity* is what is "outside" the personal part, or the manifestation of personality, including: one's physical appearance, their popularity, the reactions of others to the individual, their allure, the impressions they leave on others, and their overall social behavior.

The *social identity* refers to the perceived belonging to some larger or smaller social groups (Tajfel & Turner, 1986). This identity can also be viewed through two aspects: *relational aspect* and *collective aspect of the social identity.* The *relational aspect/self* reflects how we see ourselves in the context of our intimate relationships. *The collective aspect of social identity* refers to belonging to a particular group(s) in society: as male/female, Macedonian/Albanian/Turkish/Roma, psychologists/sociologists/lawyers, etc.

As regards personal identity, the psychologist Marcia extends the work of Ericsson and promotes the idea that sense of identity is determined mainly by two processes: the process of exploration and the process of commitment made in respect to certain personal and social characteristics. In accordance with the degree to which these two processes have been achieved, there are four identity

statuses (Marcia, 1966): *identity achievement*, *moratorium*, *foreclosure,* and i*dentity diffusion*. *Identity achievement* means completed exploration and achieved commitment. These people have developed well-defined personal values and self-concept. Their identities can be expanded further, but the foundations have already been laid. These people accept themselves and are capable of establishing intimate relationships. *Moratorium* means the exploration is completed, but commitment has not been reached. These persons have gained vague or poorly-formed ideological and professional commitments; they are still in search of identity. They are beginning to commit themselves to identity, but are still developing it. *Foreclosure* means unfinished exploration, but achieved commitment. These adolescents blindly accept the identity and the values that have been passed on by their family and their significant others. They are committed to the identity, but not as a result of their own self-exploration or crisis. In fact, they have not gone through an identity crisis, since they have avoided resisting and risking. *Identity diffusion* means unfinished exploration and non-reached commitment. Adolescents who are unable to cope with the need for development of identity avoid exploring or dedicating to something and remain in an amorphous state of identity diffusion, which can sometimes produce social isolation. This type of identity is the least complex and the least mature in comparison with the other three.

Main features of the Macedonian and Austrian societies

Macedonia is a multi-ethnic, multilingual, and multi-religious society in which these divisions largely overlap and reinforce each other, placing the country in the group of so-called plural societies or "deeply divided societies" (Христова, 2014). According to the latest census of the Republic of Macedonia, which was carried out in 2002, the ethnic Macedonian population constitutes 64.2 %, while the ethnic Albanian population is approximately 25.2 %. The conflict between the two main ethnic groups began in 2001, and ended with the signing of the Ohrid Framework Agreement (13 August 2001), which introduced elements of the consociational model of power-sharing (according to Христова и др, 2014) in the constitutional system of the country (Maleska, 2005).

In 2015, the unemployment rate in Macedonia was 26.8%[1] . In 2012, the level of GDP (nominal) was a total of $10.198 billion and per capita $4,935[2].

---

[1] *Indicators*. Republic of Macedonia State Statistical Office, *Retrieved 20 November 2015.,* http://www.stat.gov.mk/KlucniIndikatori.aspx

[2] *Report for Selected Country. International Monetary Fund. Retrieved 9 November 2015.,*
http://www.imf.org/external/pubs/ft/weo/2012/02/weodata/weorept.aspx?pr.x=2&pr.
y=17&sy=2008&ey=2012&scsm=1&ssd=1&sort=country&ds=.&br=1&c=962&s=NGDPD%2CNGD-
PDPC%2CPPPGDP%2CPPPPC%2CLP&grp=0&a=

Austria is a parliamentary-representative democracy comprising of nine federal states.[3] It is one of the richest countries in the world, with a nominal per capita GDP of $52,216. The country has developed a high standard of living and in 2014 it was ranked 21st in the world for its Human Development Index. Austria has been a member of the United Nations since 1955, it joined the European Union in 1995, and it is a founder of the OECD[4]. Austria also signed the Schengen Agreement in 1995, and adopted the Euro in 1999.[5]

The ethnic groups in Austria are: Austrians 91.1%, former Yugoslavs 4% (includes Croats, Slovenes, Serbs, and Bosnians), Turks 1.6%, Germans 0.9%, and others or unspecified 2.4% (according to the 2001 census). The GDP (nominal) for 2015 was $380.555 billion and GDP per capita for 2015 was $44,475[6].

II. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Research problems

Is there a difference in the self-definition between students from the EU and non-EU country, how do they define their personal identity, and does the way they define their personal identity (a certain orientation in the self-definition process) affect their collective identity (as importance given to social groups to whom the respondents belong) - were the main research problems.

Hypothesis

The general hypothesis states that *there is no difference in importance given to social groups to whom the respondents belong between the EU and non- EU country, as regards the aspects of identity orientation.*

---

[3] *The World Factbook*. Central Intelligence Agency. 14 May 2009. Archived from the original on 10 June 2009. *Retrieved 31 October 2015.*, https://web.archive.org/web/20090610113837/https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/geos/AU.html.

[4] *Austria About. OECD. Archived from the original on 6 May 2009. Retrieved 20 November 2015.*, https://web.archive.org/web/20090506022708/http://www.oecd.org/about/0,3347, en_33873108_33873245_1_1_1_1_1,00.html

[5] *Austria joins Schengen. Migration News. May 1995. Retrieved 30 November 2015., http://migration.ucdavis.edu/mn/more.php?id=643_0_4_0*

[6] *Austria*. International Monetary Fund. *Retrieved 25 November 2015.*, http://www.imf.org/external/pubs/ft/weo/2015/01/weodata/weorept.aspx?pr.x=67&pr.y=14&sy=2014&ey=2020&scsm=1&ssd=1&sort=country&ds=.&br=1&c=122&s=NGDPD%2CNGDPDPC%2CPPPGD-P%2CPPPPC&grp=0&a=

Variables

Citizenship was a relevant demographic variable in the study and a base for comparison.

The *identity orientation* is determined by the scores obtained on both sub-scales of the Aspects of Identity Questionnaire (AIQ), namely: a Scale which measures the orientation towards the *personal aspect of personal identity* (PI Scale) and a Scale which measures the orientation towards the *social, public aspect of personal identity* (SI Scale).

One of the tested variables assumed as variable under the influence of the level of expression of the identity orientation is the *collective identity* and it is determined by the result on the Scale for intensity of importance given to different social groups (constructed by Laponce and explained below).

Instruments

The AIQ (Aspect of Identity Questionnaire) was applied to measure the orientation towards the different aspects of identity. In fact, for the purpose of this research, two sub-scales from the Scale for measuring the aspects of identity orientation (AIQ), designed by Jonathan Cheek and Linda Tropp (Cheek & Tropp, 2002), were used.

The Personal Identity Scale (PI) measures the orientation towards the *private, personal aspect* of identity, and it refers to: own needs, thoughts, attitudes, feelings, personal values, etc.

The Social Identity Scale (SI) measures the orientation towards the *social, public aspect* of identity, and it covers the following aspects: one's physical appearance, their popularity, the reactions of others to the individual, their allure, the impressions they leave on others, and their social behavior.

The Austrian version of the AIQ was a 5-point scale, like the original one, while a 7-point scale was applied to the Macedonian sample due to the consistency of the answers with the other implemented instruments in the research "Perception of Identities among the Student Population in the Republic of Macedonia" (implemented during 2011).

The initially-implemented statistical procedures speak in line for justification of the use of both the SI and the PI scales in both (Macedonian and Austrian) samples (Христова и др., 2014).

The other tool that was applied in this study was a questionnaire designed by Laponce (2004), aimed at determining the *minority effect*. Laponce constructed a questionnaire concerning 14 different roles which every individual "plays" during

their life (gender, age, nationality, ethnicity, occupation, religion, preferred political party, nationality, place of residence, university, ethnic background, language, family, close friends)[7]. Each role also means belonging to a particular social group and is considered from the following aspects: common interests with the members of these groups, solidarity with them, how easy it is to make changes to any of the roles, general satisfaction of the members of a certain group with the current circumstances, and how important belonging to a group is for the individuals. This comparative study paid attention only to one aspect of Laponce's questionnaire: how important belonging to a certain social group is for the individuals. Each role/ group was to be located between the polarities (very important to me and it does not matter to me) on the 5- or 7-level Likert scale.

Sample

For the Macedonian sample the survey used a *target sample* consisting of 451 respondents. It included three public universities: "Ss. Cyril and Methodius" University in Skopje (originally UKIM), "Goce Delchev" University in Shtip (originally UGD), and Tetovo State University (originally DUT), from the Faculties of Social Sciences.

The Austrian sample consisted of 61 students from the University of Salzburg, from the Department of Political Science and Sociology. It was a *convenience sample*.

The distribution of respondents as regards gender is presented in Table 1 below.

Table 1. *Distribution of the sample according to university and state*

Country	Male		Female		Total	
Austria	30	49.2%	31	50.8%	61	100%
Macedonia	156	34.6%	295	65.4%	451	100%
Total	186	36.3%	326	63.7%	512	100%

III. RESULTS

Association between Personal and Social Identity Orientation and Collective Identity

---

[7] The role of language has been omitted from the initial Laponce version due to the fact that in the Republic of Macedonia the language matches the ethnicity, so in the final version a total of 13 social groups/roles will be listed.

The research question was the following: are there differences in the way that Macedonians' and Austrians' identity orientation affects the collective identity expressed through the given importance to social groups to which they belong.

The students' responses to the question as to how personally meaningful and important they find social groups/roles can be found in Table 2.

1. Characteristics of the "Over-socialized" group regarding the importance of social groups: *family* and *friends* are the most important social groups/roles for both samples of respondents who belong to the "Over-socialized" group as regards the scores on the PI and the SI scales. The least important social group/role for the Macedonian sample is that of *political party,* while for the Austrian sample it is *religion*. Besides *profession,* which is in the same position for both samples (in the the third position, or discounting *family* and *friends* - in the first position), *religion* for Macedonians and *university* for Austrians are the next important group/role.

2. The characteristics of the "Pre-defined" group regarding the importance of social groups: besides *family* and *friends*, the most important groups/roles for the Austrian respondents who belong to the category "Pre-defined" are *residence* and *place of birth*. For the Macedonian respondents in the "Pre-defined"- those groups are *religion* and *profession/student*. Once again, the least attractive social group/role for the Austrian respondents "Pre-defined" is *religion,* while for the Macedonian respondents "Pre-defined" is *political party.*

3. Characteristics of the "Ego-oriented" and "Integrated" groups regarding the importance of social groups:

Table 2. *Answers to the question: "How significant are the following groups to you concerning respondents' category (Over-socialized, Pre-defined, Ego-oriented, Integrated)?"*

Over-socialized						Pre-defined						Ego-oriented						Integrated					
Rank	MK	M	R	Austria	M	Rank	MK	M	Rank	A	M	Rank	MK	M	R	A	M	Rank	MK	M	R	A	M
I.	Family	6,44	I.	Friends	6,50	I.	Family	6,37	I.	Family	6,31	I.	Family	6,76	I	Family	6,31	I.	Family	6,73	I	Friends	6,38
II.	Friends	6,26	II.	Family	6,30	II.	Friends	6,01	I.	Friends	6,31	II.	Friends	6,54	II	Friends	6,19	II.	Friends	6,62	II	Family	6,25
III.	Profession	5,55	III.	Profession	4,60	III.	Religion	5,58	II.	Residence	4.06	III.	Religion	5,97	III	Prof.ession	4,75	III.	Religion	6,11	III	University	5,25
III.	Religion	5,55	IV.	University	4,40	IV.	Profession	5,48	III.	Birthplace	4,00	IV.	Profession	5,83	IV	University	4,13	IV.	Profession	6,04	IV	Profession	5,19
IV.	Residence	5,42	V.	P. Party	4.00	V.	Birthplace	5,13	IV.	University	3,81	V.	Residence	5,90	V	P. Party	3,88	V.	Residence	5,93	V	Citizenship	4,13
IV.	Ethnicity	5,42	VI.	Residence	3,90	VI.	Residence	5,12	V.	Profession	3,69	VI.	Ethnicity	5,58	V	Class	3,88	V.	Birthplace	5,93	VI	Residence	4,00
V	Gender	5,32	VII.	Gender	3,70	VII	Gender	4,94	VI.	Age	3,56	VII.	Age	5,39	VI	Gender	3,81	VI.	Gender	5,79	VII	Birthplace	3,88
VI.	University	5,21	VII.	Citizenship	3,70	VIII	Ethnicity	4,83	VII.	Citizenship	3,38	VII.	Citizenship	5,39	VII	Age	3,38	VII.	Ethnicity	5,78	VIII	Age	3,75
VII	Age	5,20	VIII	Class	3,60	VIII	Age	4,83	VII.	P. Party	3,38	VIII.	Birthplace	5,37	VII	Residence	3,38	VIII.	Age	5,64	IX	Gender	3,14
VIII.	Birthplace	5,19	IX.	Age	3,50	IX.	University	4,81	VII.	Class	3,38	IX.	University	5,24	VIII	Citizenship	3,31	IX.	Class	5,56	X	Class	3,38
IX	Citizenship	4,91	X.	Ethnicity	3,30	X.	Class	4,38	VIII	Ethnicity	3,31	X	Gender	5,30	IX	Ethnicity	2,75	X.	University	5,49	XI	Ethnicity	3,20
X	Class	4,79	XI.	Birthplace	3,10	XI.	Citizenship	4,27	XI.	Gender	3,00	XI.	Class	4,90	X	Birthplace	2,21	XI.	State	5,18	XII	P. Party	3,13
XI	P.Party	3,44	XII.	Religion	2,90	XII.	P. Party	3,11	X.	Religion	2,88	XII.	P. Party	2,79	XI	Religion	2,13	XII.	P. Party	3,54	XIII	Religion	2,31
Total		5,28			4,12	Total		4.98			3.98			5.46			3.85			5.72			4.15

The "Ego-oriented" and the "Integrated" respondents from both samples are the two groups that rank the same social groups as the most important ones besides *family* and *friends.* Namely, for the Macedonian "Ego-oriented" and "Integrated" respondents, the most important roles are *religion* and *profession,* and for the corresponding Austrian groups those roles are *university* and *profession*.

The analyses of the association between aspects of identity orientations (grouped in four categories) and the importance of all social groups (roles played) in society reveal that the Macedonian students place more importance on all social groups/roles than their Austrian counterparts (see Table 2). It can be said that collective identity is more important for the Macedonian respondents than for the Austrian ones (t=9,448 p<0,01).

IV. DISCUSSION

This research was based on several basic assumptions: first, that *youth is undeniably a great potential in the development of a modern, democratic and human rights-directed society*. The selected sample composed of students is a set of people who share a common experience, people who have been socialized in similar conditions, and they represent the generation they belong to. Second, *one of the major incentives for involvement in social action or social movements should be sought in the characteristics of the collective identity of individuals*.

The object of this research was to see how young people in Macedonia and Austria define themselves, how they define their personal identity, and whether the way they define the personal identity affects their collective identity.

The research data show that students (from Macedonia and from Austria) in the process of self-definition are almost equally oriented towards the private aspect and the public aspect of identity. The identity orientation in the process of self-definition is a cross-cultural phenomenon and points out the expected potential of the individuals from the two countries for self-definition and distinction from others.

Summarized, the main differences which were found between the two groups (a EU and a non-EU country) in this research were the following:

1. The least important social group/role for all the students from the EU country is *religion* (no matter how personality is integrated), while for all the students from the non-EU country that is *political party* (no matter how personality is integrated);

2. After *family* and *friends*, *religion* is the most important social group in the Macedonian case for all four groups ("Over-socialized", "Integrated", "Ego-oriented", and "Pre-defined");

3. *Profession/Student* and *university* are very important social groups/roles for the following three Austrian groups: "Over-socialized", "Integrated", and "Ego-oriented"; for the "Pre-defined" it is *residence* (and this is also followed by *place of birth*);

4. The next most important group/role for the Macedonians (after *religion)* is *profession,* that is*,* to be a student, while they rank *university* as a relatively unimportant social group;

5. The collective identity is mostly predominant in the non-EU country respondents. For all the four groups in the Macedonian sample, the average score for the importance of all social groups is higher in comparison with the same average score in the Austrian sample (see Table 2).

Literature

Arieti S (1994) Interpretation of Schizophrenia, p. 197. Jason Aronson.

Baumeister R (1986) *Identity: Cultural Change and the Struggle for Self*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, USA.

Check JM (1982) *Aggregation, moderator variables, and the validity of personality tests: A peer-rating study*, Journal of Personality and Social Psychology, Vol. 43 (6), pp. 1254-1269.

Cheek JM, Briggs SR (1982) *Self-consciousness and aspects of identity,* Journal of Research in Personality, pp. 16, 401-408.

Cheek JM, Tropp LR (2002) Aspect of identity Questionnaire, 1st edition on-line 1994 and 2nd edition on-line 2002. http://academics.wellesley.edu/Psychology/Cheek/identity.html (first accessed 26 June 2011).

Erikson EH (1956) *The problem of ego identity,* Journal of the American Psychoanalytic Association. Vol. 4, pp. 56-121.

Erikson EH (1963) *Childhood and society* (2nd ed.) New York: Norton.

Fearon JD (1999) *What is identity (As we now use the word)*, Stanford: Stanford University. http://www.stanford.edu/~jfearon/papers/iden1v2.pdf (first accessed 8 May 2012)

Fenigstein A, Scheier M F, Buss AH (1975) *Public and private self-consciousness: Assessment and theory,* Journal of Consulting and Clinical Psychology. Vol. 43*,* pp. 522–527.

Fulgosi A (1987) *Psihologija ličnosti: teorije i istraživanja,* Zagreb: Školska Knjiga.

Golubović Z (1999) *Ja i drugi,* Republika (first accessed 15 April 2010) http://www.yurope. com/zines/republika/arhiva/99/jaidrugi/.

Gormly A, Brodzinski D (1990) *Lifespan human development.* Harcourt Brace College Publishers.

Laponce J (2004) *Using a role by role interview to measure the minority effect: a note on ongoing research*, Social Science Information, Vol. 43 (3), pp. 477-492.

Laing RD (1977) *Podeljeno Ja. Politika doživljaja,* Beograd: Nolit.

Krstić D (1991) *Psihološki rečnik,* Beograd: Savremena administracija.

Maleska M (2005) "What kind of political system did Macedonia get after the Ohrid Peace Agreement?", in *New Balkan Politics*. Issue 9. http://www.newbalkanpolitics.org.mk/ napis.asp?id=31&lang=English.

Maleska M (2013) "Multi-ethnic democracy in Macedonia: political analysis and emerging scenarios" in *New Balkan Politics*. Issue 13, pp. 1-27.

Marcia JE (1966) *Development and validation of ego-identity status,* Journal ol personality and social psychology. Vol. 3 (5), pp. 551-558.

Nikolić M et al. (2004) *Mladi zagubljeni u tranzicii,* Beograd: Centar za proućavanje alternative.

Poro A (1990) *Enciklopedija Psihijatrije,* Beograd: Nolit.

Rokeach M (1960) *The open and closed mind,* New York: Basic Books.

Rokeach M (1964) *Differences between open- and closed-minded subjects on learning-set and oddity problems,* The Journal of Abnormal and Social Psychology, Vol. 68, no. 6, pp. 648-654.

Rummens JA (2000) *Canadian Identities: An Interdisciplinary Overview of Canadian Research on Identity,* Canadian heritage multiculturalism, http://ceris.metropolis.net/ Virtual%20Library/EResources/Rummens2000.pdf (accessed 12 February 2012).

Sampson E E (1978) *Personality and the location of identity*, Journal of Personality, Vol. 46, pp. 552-568.

Sedikides C, Brewer MB (2001) *Individual self, relational self, collective self*, Philadelphia, PA: Psychology Press.

Tajfel H, Turner JC (1986) *The social identity theory of inter-group behavior. In S. Worchel and L. W. Austin (eds.)*, *Psychology of Intergroup Relations*. Chicago: Nelson-Hall.

Weinreich P (1986) *The operationalisation of identity theory in racial and ethnic relations, in J.Rex and D.Mason (eds). Theories of Race and Ethnic Relations*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Weinreich P, Sounderson W (Eds) (2003) *Analysing Identity: Cross-Cultural, Societal and Clinical Contexts*, London: Routledge.

Wojslawowicz JK (2005) *Public and Private Self-Consciousness During Early Adolescence, dissertation,* Baltimore: University of Maryland http://drum.lib.umd.edu/bitstream/1903/2494/1/umi-umd-2371.pdf (first accessed 23 May 2013).

Христова Л, Серафимовска Е, Марковиќ М, Цекиќ А (2014) *Перцепција на идентитетите на студентската популација во Република Македонија*, Скопје: Универзитет Св Кирил и Методиј, Институт за социолошки и политичко-правни истражувања-Скопје. (In English: Hristova L, Serafimovska E, Markovich M, Cekich A (2014) *Perception of Students' Identities in the Republic of Macedonia*, Skopje: Ss. "Cyril and Methodius" University, Institute for Sociological, Political and Juridical Research - Skopje.)