

Real-Self and Virtual-Self: Identity Matrices of Adolescents and Adults

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Understanding the trajectories of identity formation in response to the interplay between traditional and digital socialization, especially among the younger generation, is interesting for predicting the areas of opportunity and risks of a changing society. The aim of the study is to carry out a comparative analysis of the specific aspects of online and offline identities and their structure in adolescents and parents. The study sample comprised 396 adolescents aged 14 to 17 and 411 parents of adolescents of this age. The ‘Who Am I’ method was used to assess real and virtual identities. The results show that the online and offline identity matrices of adolescents and parents differ from each other in a number of parameters. For adolescents, the categories of the “Social Self” and “Personal Self” appear online as equal, while offline the importance of the social Self increases. For parents, the social Self definitely dominates in the two worlds. For adolescents and parents, digital identity is the leading subcategory in the online social Self. Parents are characterized by a less rich Self-image in the virtual space compared to both adolescents and their own image of the real Self. The virtual Self and the real Self do not oppose each other but actively interact on the principle of mutual complementation. Meanwhile, for adolescents and parents they differ significantly in content and are constructed in different ways. Compared to parents, adolescents develop a more holistic Self-image online and offline, which allows them to master adaptive strategies of mixed convergent reality better, and in retrospect the strategies prove to be pre-adaptive and determine a higher readiness of new generations to change.

Keywords: digital socialization, real-self, virtual-self, social self, personal self, digital identity, real identity, extended personality, adolescents, parents.

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Я-реальное и Я-виртуальное: идентификационные матрицы подростков и взрослых

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Понимание векторов формирования идентичности в условиях взаимодействия традиционной и цифровой социализации, особенно у подрастающего поколения, представляет интерес для прогнозирования зон возможностей и рисков изменяющегося общества. Цель работы — сравнительный анализ особенностей идентичности и ее структуры у подростков и родителей в онлайн и офлайн. Выборку исследования составили 396 подростков от 14 до 17 лет и 411 родителей подростков этого возраста. Для оценки реальной и виртуальной идентичности использовалась методика «Кто я?». Полученные результаты показывают, что идентификационные онлайн- и офлайн-матрицы подростков и родителей различаются между собой по ряду параметров. У подростков категории «Социальное Я» и «Личностное Я» выступают в онлайн как равновеликие, а в офлайн растет значимость социального Я. У родителей в двух мирах безусловно доминирует социальное Я. В качестве ведущей подкатегории в социальном Я онлайн у подростков и родителей выступает цифровая идентичность. Для родителей характерен менее насыщенный образ Я в виртуальном пространстве по сравнению и с подростками, и с собственным образом реального Я. Я-виртуальное и Я-реальное не противостоят друг другу, а активно взаимодействуют по принципу взаимного дополнения; при этом у подростков и родителей они содержательно значительно различаются и конструируются разными способами. По сравнению с родителями подростки формируют более целостный образ Я онлайн и офлайн, что позволяет им в большей степени осваивать адаптивные стратегии смешанной конвергентной реальности, которые в ретроспективе оказываются преадаптивными и определяют более высокую готовность новых поколений к изменениям.

Ключевые слова: цифровая социализация, Я-реальное, Я-виртуальное, социальное Я, личностное Я, цифровая идентичность, реальная идентичность, расширенная личность, подростки, родители.

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Introduction

The challenges of the constantly changing modern world, including those determined by the increasing role of digital technologies, raise the question about the specifics of identity formation, primarily among adolescents, for whom this process is most important due to both age characteristics and high online activity. Identity performs a number of functions related to orientation in the world and its structuring, value

navigation and existential fullness, and gives integrity, continuity and certainty to an individual, providing regulation of behavior through differentiation with various social communities and solidarity with significant groups. Analyzing the directions of identity formation among different generations in response to the interplay between traditional and digital socialization will allow to take a more holistic look at the areas of opportunities and risks for a changing society from this prospective.

Erik Erikson wrote about the complex multilevel identity structure, paying special attention to the process of its formation during the psychosocial development of personality and emphasizing the social level of its reflection through the solidarity of a person with group ideals, self-categorization of oneself in the world and the construction of self-identical and consistent self [13]. Serge Moscovici introduced the concept of the identity matrix as a categorical grid, in which many identities co-exist and are constructed in the process of group and individual interaction on the basis of connections and distinctions [7]. Henri Tajfel and John Turner considered social identity as a portion of the self-concept, which is formed as a result of the processes of categorization and social comparison that determine group affiliation and place an individual into the 'us versus them' frame [17]. Social identity theory makes a distinction between a social identity (the result of identification through group membership) and a personal identity (identification through unique personality traits and features), which are integrated as a personal position in the social system. Identity is arranged in a hierarchy from the most important to the least significant categories, and within a time perspective from the past to the future [16].

Research on identity in the digital environment focuses primarily on expanding opportunities to experiment with self-construction in the virtual social space, on finding new boundaries and personal self-categorizations, on creating new images of oneself that differ from the real self [5]. In the first works related to this subject, virtual identity was considered as one of the forms of realization of the 'ideal self' in the situation of identity crisis and dissatisfaction, leading to 'blurring' and distortion of self-awareness [18; 19]. In regard to the place of digital identity in an individual's self-awareness, researchers often tended to analyze digital identity as an aspect of real identity, as one of its projections into the virtual world [4]. More recent works focused not only on the blurriness and multiplicity of digital identity but also on its possibilities to be a stable form of building and self-presentation of a personality in the real world [1; 9].

A number of works devoted to theoretical and empirical research in the context of the cultural and historical paradigm of digital sociality and mixed reality as key characteristics of digital socialization [10; 11] suggest another trajectory of identity transformation amid digitalization of everyday life. The growing importance of various digital socio-cultural practices and online spaces where these practices are implemented contributes to the building of an integral hybrid identity. This identity combines, in a complex way, characteristics that are conditionally related to the virtual and real worlds and, in the modern context, represent the attributes of convergent reality.

Although there are many studies on the identity of adolescents and young people, empirical works devoted

to studying the relation between the real and the virtual in their identity are just beginning to appear [8], and works focusing on intergenerational comparisons, to the best of our knowledge, have not yet appeared. Thus, the **aim** of this study is to carry out a comparative analysis of the specific aspects of online and offline identities and their structure in adolescents and parents. The following hypotheses were put forward:

1. Compared with the virtual world, in the real world self-descriptions related to the social self dominate in the structure of identity of both parents and adolescents.

2. Teenagers are more characterized by self-descriptions through an individual's personality traits, and parents — through a social affiliation.

3. In the real and virtual worlds, a portion of self-descriptions of both adolescents and parents coincide, which can be considered as one of the indicators of the mixed reality identity.

4. Parents are characterized by the transfer of social statuses from the real to the virtual world.

5. Teenagers are characterized by the transfer of self-descriptions from the real to the virtual world, and vice versa.

Research Methodology and Procedure

The study sample consisted of 396 adolescents aged 14 to 17 (182 boys and 192 girls, 45.9% and 48.5%, respectively; 22 respondents did not indicate their gender — 5.6%) and 411 parents aged 28 to 57 ($M=41$, 70 men and 334 women, 17% and 81.3%, respectively; 7 respondents did not indicate their gender — 1.7%). The sample included respondents from Volgograd (15.6%), Petropavlovsk-Kamchatsky (15.7%), Novosibirsk (13.4%), Moscow and the Moscow Region (24.5%), Makhachkala (15.2%) and Yekaterinburg (15.6%).

The 'Who am I' method was used to assess real and virtual identities [6]. The respondents were offered the following instructions: "Please think and give 5 answers to each of the two questions: 'Who am I in the Internet?' and 'Who am I in real life?'".

The obtained data was processed using qualitative content analysis in consultation with eight experts at several stages (initial encoding, approval of categories with two experts, verification by five experts of the legitimate character of the categorization of self-descriptions, frequency analysis).

The data were processed in IBM SPSS Statistics 20.0, using Pearson's chi-squared test.

Results

The social self in real and virtual identities of teenagers and parents. Based on the content analysis, all

the self-descriptions were divided into two categories: social self and personal self. Within the general social self-category, a number of subcategories were identified: pan-human identity ('human', 'ordinary person'), professional identity ('employee', 'worker'), academic identity ('pupil'), family identity ('son', 'mother'), belongingness to groups of people with shared interests ('music lover', 'role player'), gender and age identity ('girl', 'teenager'), religious identity ('Muslim'), civil and regional identity ('citizen'), ethnic identity ('Russian'), economic identity ('consumer'). Separately, in addition to the categories presented, digital identity was distinguished, which included descriptions of oneself as an online user, consumer, content creator and moderator.

In the real and virtual worlds, pan-human and 'friendly' identities are important for teenagers. Compared to their parents, the importance of academic and family identities is significantly reduced for them online. For parents, both real and virtual identities are dominated by family affiliation. Belongingness to a group of friends

and professional identity that is equally represented both online and offline are also important for them. Gender, age, religious, civil, regional, ethnic, economic identities and belongingness to groups of people with shared interests are the least common in both groups in the real and online worlds (Figure 1).

When self-assessing in the virtual world, almost every third teenager and parent uses self-descriptions related to digital identity. When analyzing within this category, parents more often describe themselves as users (49%) ('user') and content consumers (40%) ('subscriber', 'viewer', 'searching for something new'). As opposed to parents, teenagers, in addition to users (35%) and content consumers (27%), also identify themselves with gamers (17% – teenagers, 4.1% – parents) ('player', 'gamer', 'Dota player') and content creators and moderators (21% – teenagers, 7.6% – parents) ('blogger', 'YouTuber', 'meme creator'). Self-descriptions related to digital characteristics also appear in real identity: 1 adult ('user') and 9 teenagers ('user', 'Dota player') had these self-descriptions.

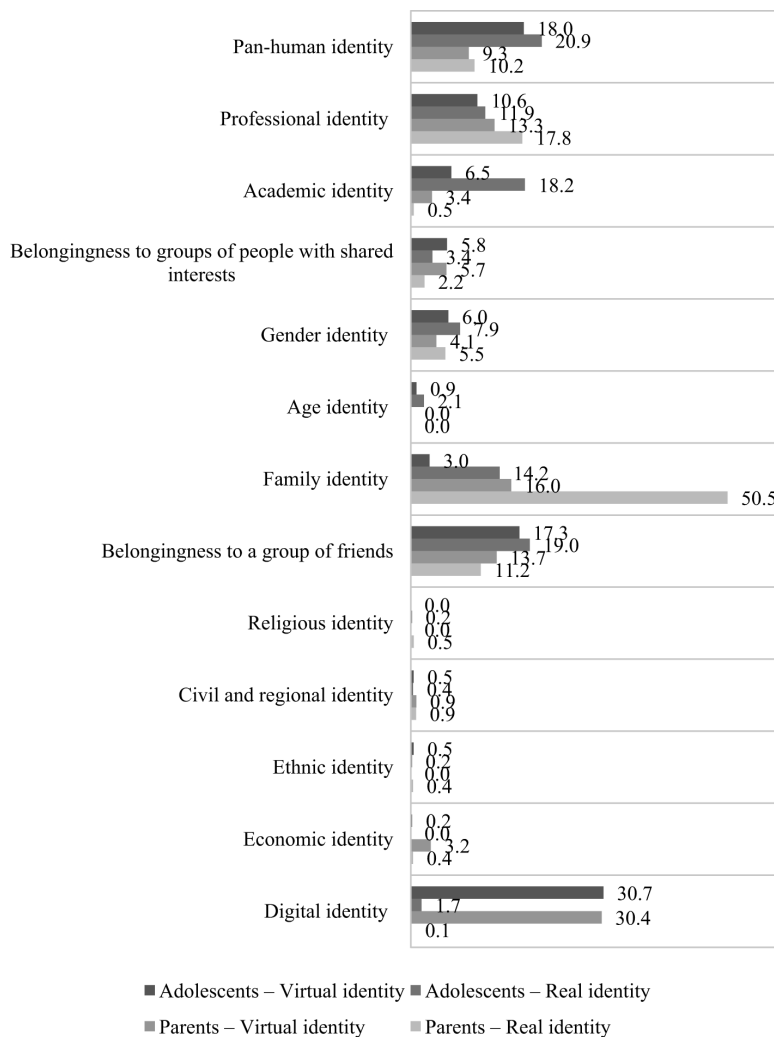


Fig. 1. Categorization of the social self among adolescents and parents in the real and virtual worlds (per cent of the total number of categories within the social self)

The personal self in the real and virtual identities of teenagers and parents. In the personal self-category, several subcategories of self-descriptions were identified: various role-based characteristics, personality traits and behavioral patterns ('responsible', 'kind', 'leader') that, to some extent, are conditionally divided, and also self-assessment of appearance ('beautiful', 'athletic'), problematic identity ('inadequate', 'social outcast', 'mouse'), situational states ('busy', 'tired') and digital self-descriptions that included descriptions of themselves through memes and pop culture heroes ('orc', 'rofler', 'Naruto'), specifics of online anonymity ('anonymous', 'invisible'), ignoring attitude towards the Internet ('rare guest', 'you won't find me there'). Role-based characteristics included self-descriptions through communicative ('collocutor', 'sociable') and prosocial ('assistant', 'adviser', 'responsive') roles, the status of popularity and one's own importance ('popular', 'cool'), intellectual and creative characteristics ('creative personality', 'intellectual', 'analyst'), personal uniqueness ('personality', 'good person') and metaphorical descriptions ('workhorse', 'Oblomov', 'tiger').

For every second teenager and parent, identification through role-based characteristics comes to the fore in both the real and virtual worlds (Figure 2). Personality traits and behavioral patterns come second: every third adult and teenager describe themselves through them in the real world, and every fifth — in the virtual world. Every seventh teenager and parent use digital self-descriptions in the virtual world. For parents, it is more often associated with anonymity and ignoring attitude towards

the Internet, and for teenagers — with identification with memes and digital pop culture heroes. At the same time, unlike parents, some teenagers use digital characteristics for real identities. Identification through negative self-descriptions (problematic identity) or appearance can equally rarely be found online and offline among adolescents. Nevertheless, parents have practically no negative self-descriptions in real life, but, in the virtual world they are more common for parents than for teenagers.

It is worth highlighting the most common subcategory in self-descriptions of the personal self — role-based characteristics. Among the role-based characteristics in virtual identity, the most common is the communicative role: out of all the self-descriptions that are included in the role-based characteristics, slightly less than half of adolescents (42%) and a third of adults (37%) fall into this subcategory. However, in real identity, self-descriptions of communicative roles are less common: every third adolescent (35%) and only every seventh parent (14.5%) give these self-descriptions. As a matter of virtual identity, every seventh-eighth description of role-based characteristics of adolescents is associated with personal uniqueness (13.3%), metaphorical self-descriptions (12.9%), intellectual and creative characteristics (12.9%), the status of popularity and one's own importance (12.9%). While the frequency of using the last two categories by adolescents in the real identity practically does not change (11.4% and 11.8%, respectively), self-descriptions associated with personal uniqueness are almost two times more common (22.3%) as well as prosocial role-based characteristics (11.4% against 6.4% in the virtual world).

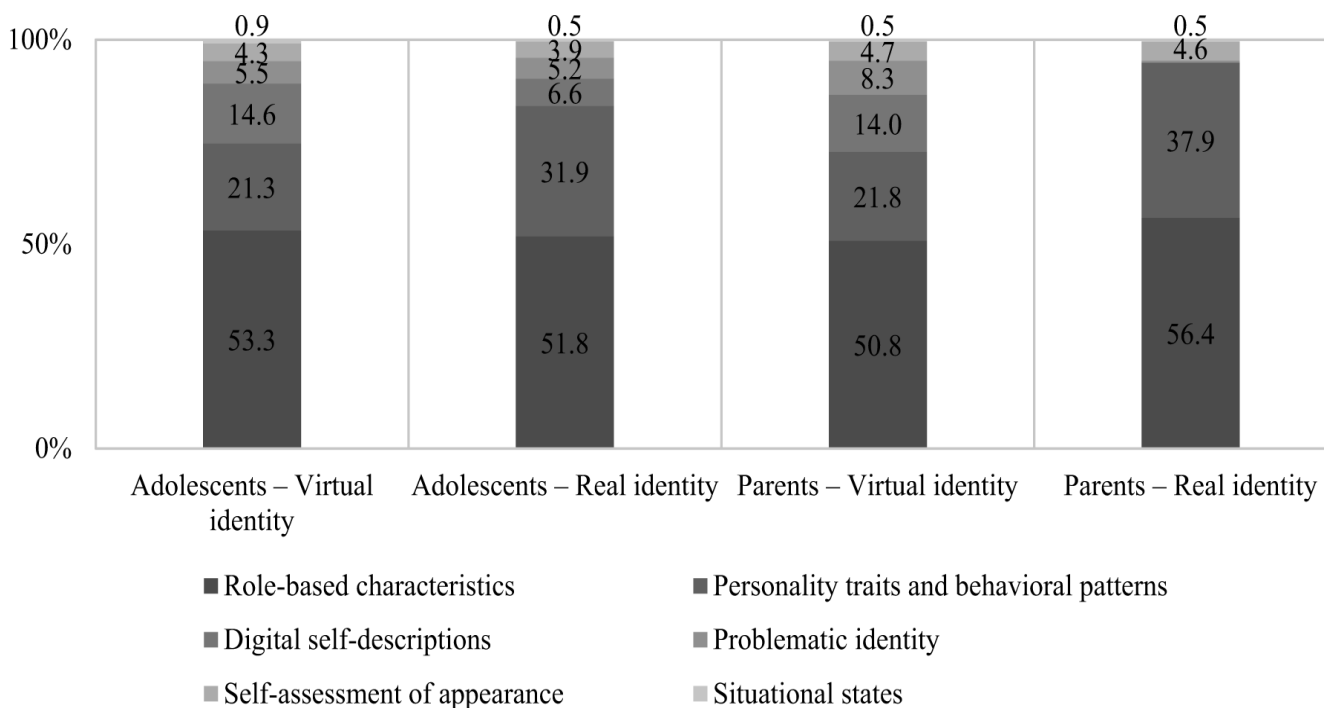


Fig. 2. Categorization of the personal self among adolescents and parents in the real and virtual worlds (per cent of the total number of categories within the personal self)

For parents, role-based characteristics related to intellectual and creative potential (18.4%), prosocial behavior (14.3%), personal uniqueness (13.3%) are important in the virtual space, whereas the categories of metaphorical self-descriptions (8.2%) and popularity (9.2%) are less common. In real identity, the number of self-descriptions through personal uniqueness (31.8%), which occupies a prominent place in role-based characteristics, and prosocial behavioral patterns increases (21.8%).

Real and virtual identities: relation between key categories and 'digital' characteristics. In virtual identity, adolescents equally use self-descriptions related to the categories of the social self and personal self (Figure 3). In real identity, self-descriptions through social statuses and affiliation are somewhat more common. For most parents, self-description through the social self in both the real and virtual worlds is more important. Unlike parents, teenagers more often use digital characteristics in self-descriptions of the personal self-category both in the virtual and real world, whereas parents do not use them at all in the real world. The analysis of the category of the social self in virtual reality shows that parents, on the contrary, use digital characteristics more

often than teenagers, but, first of all, describing themselves as users and content consumers.

Additional parameters for assessing the identity of adolescents and parents: emotional valence, the coincidence of real and virtual identities, the number of self-descriptions. All the self-descriptions of parents and teenagers were evaluated by experts and divided into three groups based on the presence of a certain emotional orientation in them: positive (e.g., 'good friend', 'good mother', 'valued worker'), neutral (e.g., 'daughter', 'employee') and negative (e.g., 'stupid person', 'idiot'). Teenagers and parents differ in how positively they see themselves in the virtual ($\chi^2=44.96$, Cramer's $V=0.30$, $p<0.01$) and real worlds ($\chi^2=29.06$, Cramer's $V=0.23$, $p<0.01$). The vast majority of parents and two-thirds of teenagers characterize themselves in both cases without emotional coloring (neutral). In both worlds teenagers are more likely to describe themselves more positively than parents. Every third teenager in the virtual space and every fourth in the real world assess themselves positively, and this difference is significant ($\chi^2=54.12$, Cramer's $V=0.47$, $p<0.01$). For parents, real self appeared to be more positive ($\chi^2=101.97$, Cramer's $V=0.63$, $p<0.01$) (Fig. 4).

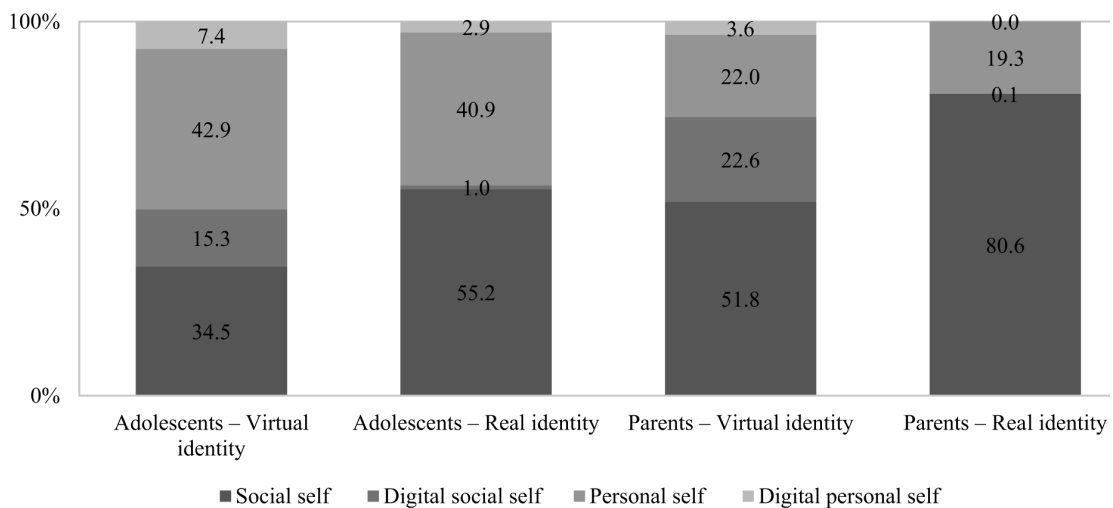


Fig. 3. The relation between self-descriptions of the social self and personal self-categories and digital characteristics included in them in the real and virtual identities of adolescents and parents, (per cent of the total number of self-descriptions)

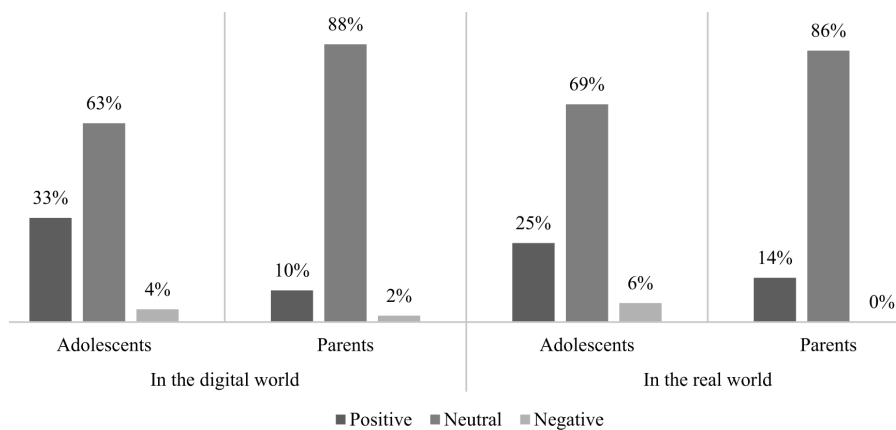


Fig. 4. Emotional valence of self-descriptions of teenagers and parents' real and virtual identities

The number of coincidences of self-descriptions in the real and virtual worlds of the same respondent was evaluated on a 6-point scale, where 0 points meant no self-descriptions coincided, and 5 points — all the self-descriptions of virtual self and real self coincided. Both children and adults have virtual and real identities converge: a third of teenagers (33%) and parents (33%) have 4-5 coincided self-descriptions out of 5 (Figure 5). At the same time, every fifth teenager and every fourth parent gave completely different self-descriptions in the real and virtual worlds. There are no statistically significant differences between adolescents and parents in the selected parameter of the coincidence of real and virtual identities.

The number of self-descriptions of adolescents and adults separately in the real and virtual worlds was also defined (with a maximum of 5 self-descriptions). The average number of self-descriptions in the digital world ($\chi^2=17.67$, Cramer's $V=0.18$, $p<0.01$) differs between adolescents and parents: adolescents give, on average, 3.4 characteristics, and parents — 3. There are no differences in the number of self-descriptions in the real world between adolescents and parents, that is, on average, 3.7 characteristics.

Discussion

The social self in the identity matrices of adolescents and parents. Online and offline identity matrices of teenagers and parents differ in a number of parameters. For adolescents, the categories of the social self and personal self appear online as equal, and offline the importance of the social self is growing. For parents, however, the social self definitely dominates in the two worlds, accounting for more than 80% in the offline identity matrix and a little less in the online one. These differences

in identity structure can be determined by the process of constructing self-concept, which is important for adolescents at this stage of age, and the search for a balance between the growing need for social belonging, which is reflected in the use of self-descriptions through various social groups, and the high-burning need for autonomy, uniqueness and individuality, which is expressed in self-assessments in the form of unique personal and role-based characteristics.

For teenagers, digital identity is indisputably the leading subcategory in the online social self. It should be noted that already in 2010, when teenagers described their 'I am in the Internet', then a relatively new type of the social self — the Internet user — came out on top [12]. Digital identity is followed by pan-human and 'friendly' identities. These three determine the main online activity of teenagers aimed at general self-determination and communication. Family and academic identities are significantly less manifested online compared to their representation in real self. As an important basis for the traditional socialization of adolescents, these identifications — without 'migrating' to digital social space — were more common elements of the image of teenager's real self. Thus, it is possible that for teenagers the digital environment becomes a space of separation from significant figures (parents and teachers), where they prefer 'adult roles'.

Digital identity is also indisputably the leading subcategory for parents online, and this is despite the fact that, in general, they are more characterized by identification through various social statuses and groups. However, all these statuses and affiliations do not withstand competition with digital identification that significantly surpasses even family affiliation, which absolutely dominates for parents offline. Although, the position of family affiliation online has been weakened three times compared to offline, where it is certainly the leading identity

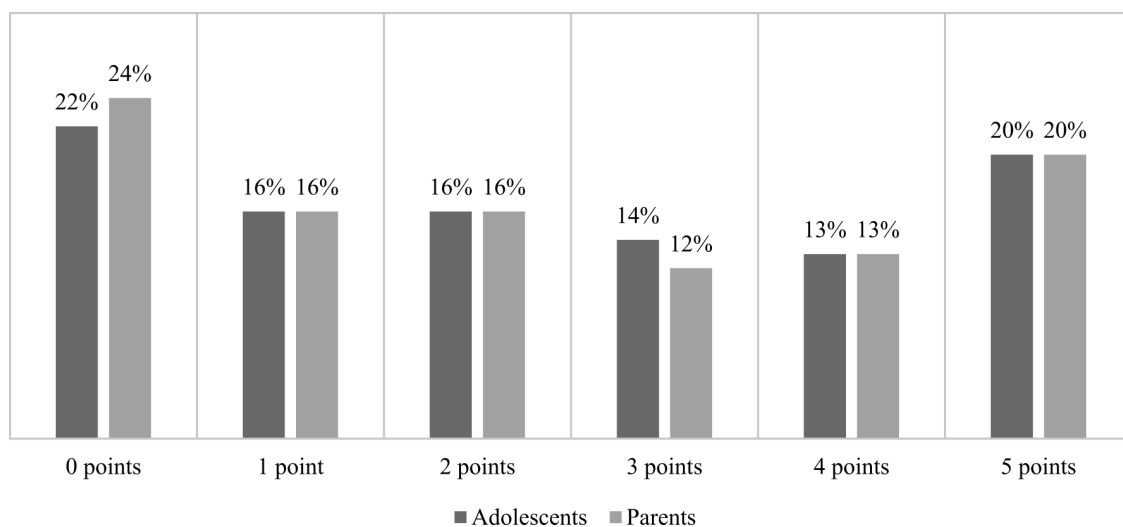


Fig. 5. The coincidence of self-descriptions in the real and virtual identities of adolescents and parents

in the category of the social self, this is perhaps one of the important reasons that allows some parents, for whom the family comes to the fore in all the worlds, to be alert and monitor their children in digital spaces. With adolescents, the 'digital identity' subcategory is more differentiated than with parents.

It should be noted that in virtual identity, the share of digital characteristics in relation to the total number of adolescents' self-descriptions is less than that of parents. This may be explained by the fact that teenagers see the virtual world as a space for realizing their belongingness to various groups within the social self, and not just limit themselves to identifying with users or content consumers. This is consistent with the idea that, while becoming an integral part of the processes of creating meanings and new forms of activity, the Internet as a generative system is associated with the transformation of individuals and allows to produce new diverse forms of identities [2].

The personal self in identity matrices. Online, both teenagers and parents have more self-descriptions related to the category of the personal self. Given the dominance of role-based characteristics in it and relying on other studies on the Internet identity [3; 4], it can be argued that virtual space allows to play a more diverse repertoire of roles, and gives more opportunities to experiment with identity. For both children and adults, role-based characteristics and personality traits are the leading subcategories of the personal level of identity.

The specificity of digital sociality is reflected in the construction of the self-image by teenagers in the virtual space through personal characteristics associated with communication (belongingness to a group of friends, communicative roles). It can be assumed that, primarily for teenagers, the virtual environment provides more opportunities to meet communication needs, the needs of belongingness to a peer reference group, and of experimenting with self-presentation. In addition, social networks enable a private, public or intermediate 'stage' for social and personal characteristics due to flexible privacy settings [15]. Parents are similar to teenagers in their preference for communicative roles in the virtual space, which may refer to the general characteristics of digital sociality.

Special characteristics reflecting the unique role models of the digital environment (user, content creator and consumer, gamer, etc.) appear in primarily virtual self-image. At the same time, as in the 'digital identity' subcategory (social self), teenagers' self-descriptions are more diverse in the personal self than adults' self-descriptions, which, for instance, is reflected in a wide range of memes as specific artifacts of digital sociality.

Real and digital personalities in a mixed (convergent) reality. Comparative analysis of self-descriptions in the real and virtual worlds allowed us to understand how real and digital personalities correlate in mixed real-

ity. Unlike parents, teenagers' self-descriptions are more diverse in content in both worlds, and what's more, when evaluating themselves online, teenagers generate self-descriptions more easily and their self-descriptions are longer. Parents are characterized by a less rich self-image in the virtual space compared to both teenagers and their own image of the real self. It is possible that parents 'simplify' or 'impoverish' their image in the virtual world. For the younger generation, who perceive online as a proper space for constructing identity and personality formation, the self-concept in the virtual world appears to be no less cognitively complex than in the real world. Another evidence for the importance of virtual space in the process of identity building may be that adolescents, in general, more often than parents construct an emotionally positive identity, which is consistent with the data that rising generation has a more optimistic picture of the world compared to adults [11]. Additionally, teenagers give more positively colored self-descriptions in the virtual space, which confirms the importance and comfort of this environment for them. It may be determined by the online means of self-presentation, the variety of communicative spaces and other 'extensions' of and 'additions' to the personality due to which teenagers can feel more confident and independent [14]. Despite the dominant discourse in early studies on building an image of the 'ideal self' in the digital space in response to the crisis of real identity, in this study, adolescents' self-descriptions in the real world are also no less positive, which generally contributes to building a complex positive self-image in mixed reality.

The obtained results indicate a new trajectory of self-formation, which is expressed not in the construction of an alternative virtual identity that is different or antagonistic to the real one, as it was indicated in earlier studies [4], but in the convergence of real and virtual identities and, consequently, of digital and real personalities. This is clearly evidenced by the coincidence of a third of all the self-descriptions for both children and adults in the real self and virtual self. Data on the convergence of digital and real personalities have already been obtained in an array of studies [14; 19]. The number of repetitive self-descriptions in the image of the real and virtual self, as well as a similar distribution in the number of social and personal characteristics of adolescents, testifies in favor of constructing a holistic self-image in a convergent reality. This is consistent with the study data on adolescents and young people that shows stable reproduction of characteristics (usage of the same self-descriptions) of the virtual and real self among active Internet users [8]. The convergence of online and offline worlds, the evidence of which we found while studying the picture of the adolescents and adults' world [11], may also be seen in the self-reflection of adolescents in both the virtual space and real world primarily through identification with humanity, i.e., transferring yourself

as a biological species and a social unit from the real to the virtual world and not existing in it solely as a digital being, for instance, an avatar. We see a similar picture among adults, however, rather due to projecting their characteristics from the real world into the virtual one. Examples of adolescents transitioning digital characteristics from the virtual self to the real self show the emerging trend of blurring the boundaries between the two worlds, when a holistic self-concept can be formed on the basis of role models that initially arose in the digital environment. Thus, adolescents and parents' offline and online identities have significantly different content and are constructed in different ways, although the general tendency towards convergence of offline and online identities was found.

Conclusion

Identity is the most important result of the socialization of both a child and an adult, which changes at every stage of age; the process of identity formation lasts a person's entire life and is determined by a specific historical situation. It is a continuously evolving socio-psychological construct. In addition to generally noting the features of identity formation in the modern world among different generations, this study allowed to identify the following trajectories of this process amid the ongoing convergence of the modern world's realities.

The virtual self and the real self do not oppose each other but actively interact on the principle of mutual complementation. Digital space fulfils specific functions in identity formation, creating new opportunities, especially for teenagers, for identity development. For teenagers, the bright and multimedia digital space mediated by signs, graphics and video is a 'richer' and relatively safe place for their social experimentation, providing ample opportunities for communication, self-determination, self-presentation, finding 'us', and involvement in emotional intimacy. On the one hand, the transfer into cyberspace of those sides of real identity that are difficult to embody in the physical world is important with regard to building a digital identity. On the other hand, the formation of system-forming categories of human identity (for example, pan-human identity) in the digital space serves as an important basis for the integration of virtual identity with real identity. Thus, in a sense, digital identity becomes, in the end, a revised and edited version created not so much for the digital world as for the world of convergent reality.

The increase in the intensity of the Internet usage, including hyperconnectivity (when digital devices become almost constant companions of modern people), determines the qualitative changes in the perception of people of all ages of the world around and themselves in it. The study provides additional arguments for the ir-

revocable transition from the autonomization of online and offline worlds to their convergence. It is largely determined by the interaction of traditional and digital socialization and defines an important trajectory for forming the self-concept, that is, the convergence of digital and real personalities and the formation of a new type of personality as a hybrid formation, the boundaries of which are expanded due to the digital dimension. In accordance with the methodological principle of complementarity, in a hybrid personality, digital expansion in relation to the incomplete human nature that is being formed in physical reality becomes an integral component, without which description of this personality is meaningless. It can be that understanding the features of a hybrid personality will also allow to better control an integrated digital identity, which today is less controlled by an individual.

The self-image of modern teenagers and parents seems to be more differentiated compared to previous generations: not only due to the combination of two still significantly different components — the real self and the virtual self, but also due to the high differentiation of the virtual self. This indicates a greater diversity and complexity of the picture of the world of modern people and special requirements for the processes of its formation, especially in terms of integration of different components, which is especially important to take into account in the process of education and upbringing of the rising generation. Moreover, among adolescents, the influence of virtual identity on the holistic self-image is expressed in the fact that the balance of the social self and the personal self-relationship tends to shift towards the personal self, which may be a manifestation of not only age-related, but also generation-related aspects. It is possible that identification through social affiliation (i.e., through collective identity), which has dominated in one form or another throughout the history of mankind and is especially significant in collectivist cultures, may begin losing ground to self-determination through personal qualities and roles. This may also be the result of digital sociality, as the spread of technology has become one of the factors changing the driving forces of society's development, when interaction, cooperation and competition of individuals and not of social groups come to the fore.

Thus, the rising generation, in comparison with their parents, is more actively forming a picture of the combined reality of the modern world, where the virtual world does not displace reality, but complements it, which in general is the most important factor of adaptation in the modern information society. The significance of the pan-human subcategory in the virtual identity can be another indicator of experiencing convergent reality and gradual change in the assessment of the digital environment from its perception as an isolated special universe to its assessment as a living, interactive space and

an integral part of the surrounding world. Hence, due to the active 'habitation' of virtual space, adolescents, compared to their parents, master adaptive strategies

of mixed reality better, and in retrospect the strategies prove to be pre-adaptive and determine a higher readiness of new generations for change.

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