

## **Socio-educational Factors Promoting Formation of National Identity of Contemporary Adolescents**

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### **Abstract**

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*The formation of the national identity of teenagers is a relevant area of the nowadays scientific researches, because a person is intensively searching for oneself, seeks to be assigned to a national group. During the periods of globalization, there are many external factors that can influence the formation of identity. Therefore, the aim of this article, using the mixed method strategy, is to reveal the factors determining the formation of the national identity of adolescents. Bronfenbrenner's theory of ecological systems has been used analysing and interpreting data of the article. It was found that the most significant microsystem and mesosystem were the formation of the national identity of adolescents. A certain role of the exosystem has been investigated, but the macrosystem does not cause teenagers to form national identity. The results of the research presented in this article allow to predict and design the tendencies of the formation of the national identity of adolescents.*

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### **Introduction**

Many researchers (Bauman, 1992; Tomlinson, 2002; Meijl, 2008; Khajavi and Abbasian, 2011; Gladkikh, 2011; Higgins, 2011; Caselli, 2012; Sharif and Yarmohammadi, 2013) link globalisation with material needs of the market, when favourable economic indicators are pursued, the picture of the “globalized” individual is implemented and when borders of internal life are trespassed (Kripienė, 2012). The society, which is going through value-based, demographical and geopolitical changes, also has influence on building national identity. Since the national identity is inherent to the process of socialisation, as the interaction between the person's ego and other people's (Unterreiner, 2017) and is built on the basis of individual's biography, it is expedient to analyse the socio-educational factors. Bronfenbrenner's theory of ecological systems, when people interact in microsystem, mesosystem, exosystem and macrosystem while creating human environment together as well as its all social, cultural and psychological formations (Berger and Luckmann, 1999; Shelton, 2019), is considered to be relevant. The socio-educational factors (family, school, peers, etc.) that derive from the aforesaid systems contribute to formation of each individual's national identity. The choice of the period of adolescence for research is substantiated from the methodological perspective because at this developmental period an individual's self-perception is formed, the search for the self enhances as well as the link with a specific group. Therefore, it is important to respond in a targeted way and to foresee the trends in forming young people's national identity.

**The problem of the research** has been formulated as the following question: what socio-educational factors promote the formation of the national identity of adolescents?

**The goal of the research:** to conduct research on the socio-educational factors that promote the formation of the national identity of adolescents.

**The objectives:**

1. On the basis of the analysed scholarly literature, to reveal the factors that precondition the formation of the adolescents' national identity.
2. On the basis of the research data, to identify the socio-educational factors that promote formation of the adolescents' national identity.

**The research methodology** is based on the following theoretical approaches:

- theory of social constructivism, when national identity makes up an inseparable part of the social reality and individuals jointly create the human environment as well as social, cultural and psychological formations (Berger, Luckmann, 1999).
- strategy of mixed methods (Bryman, 2008; Bergman, 2008; Laban, 2012; Kuada, 2012; Creswell, 2014), which is based on the combination of quantitative and qualitative methods and, thus, enables the use of various approaches to the phenomenon under analysis. The strategy of mixed methods reveals different features of the same phenomenon, as well as helps to provide more detailed and extensive results.

**The quantitative research.** Seeking to reveal the socio-educational factors that contribute to building the adolescents' national identity, it was firstly important to conduct research on the expression of adolescents' national identity. The questionnaire consisting of open-ended and closed-ended questions was devised as an instrument for the research. The expression of national identity was observed at three (cognitive, emotional and connotative (behavioural)) levels (Phinney, 1989, 1993; Barret, 2000; Deaux, 2001; Robinson, 2011).

**Table 1. Empirical indicators of quantitative research**

Cognitive level	Knowledge of the national factors expressing the mother tongue, ethnic culture and history of Lithuania and other factors in the past and present contexts.
Emotional - evaluative level	Emotional-evaluative relationship with the mother tongue, ethnic culture and history of Lithuania.
Connotative level	Involvement in the nurturance of Lithuanianness.

Later, applying the exploratory factor analysis, which is linked to analysing a closed homogenous complex of primary properties and revelation of its internal structure, attempts were made to group factors that comprise the national identity according to their interrelation. Applying the Student's t criterion, single- and multi-factor ANOVA, the obtained factors were linked with independent variables (gender, average of marks, age, parents' educational background, nationality, country, role of school) revealing the importance of socio-educational factors to formation of adolescents' national identity. The data were also processed applying Pearson  $\chi^2$  Chi square criterion.

The sample of the quantitative research. The sample of the research is reliable because it was calculated on the basis of the data of school learners attending general education schools with Lithuanian as the language of instruction in Lithuania, which was obtained from the Statistics Department of Lithuania. The sample included 395 9th formers and 395 10th formers.

The representativeness of the sample was also ensured. The respondents residing in Lithuania were selected using the probability cluster (area) sampling for the quantitative research, when the total population was split into clusters (areas) and the sample was selected by simple random sampling including the elements of all the selected clusters (areas). 10 clusters (districts of Lithuania) were distinguished, which comprised 16 general education schools of Lithuania (10 city schools and 6 rural schools).

**Qualitative Research**

The narrative strategy chosen for the qualitative research focuses on collection and interpretation of data on the basis of stories that people use for description of their life. This can include life stories, biographies, personal experience methods, oral stories, family stories, letters and other types of narrative research. Everything is based on understanding that individuals create their life on the basis of history. The research strategy is mainly related to the constructive paradigm and critical/feminist thinking (Hatch, 2002).

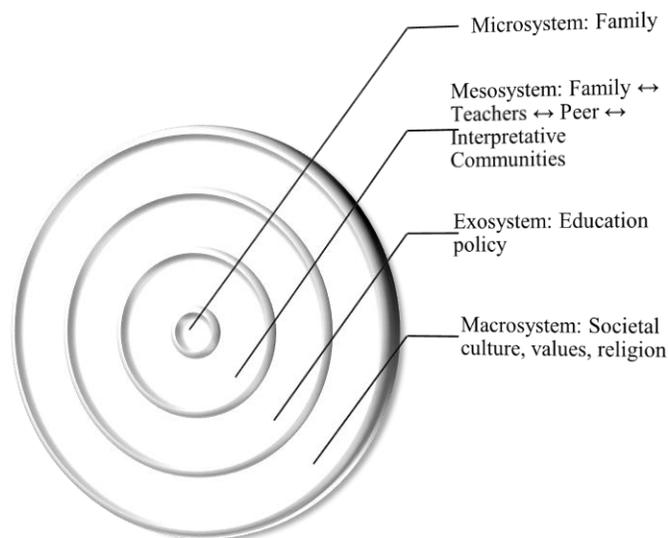
The constructivist paradigm of qualitative research. In this case, according to J. A. Hatch (2002), the nature of reality is understood as multiple reality, which is constructed; epistemology determines what can be known; the link between the knowledge and the individual, who possesses it), i.e., knowledge is constructed by an individual.

The sample of the research. There is no point in seeking random samples in the qualitative research. On the contrary, only the cases, which are informative from the research perspective should be chosen. Therefore, the participants in the quantitative research were selected applying the selection of typical cases. The participants in the research wrote a semi-structured essay. Such a format allows using minimal “frame”, i.e. key statements, but does not prevent the participants from free expression in writing. On the basis of their life story as a narrative, the school learners revealed the educational factors of their national identity formation. The essays of 78 adolescents from Lithuanian schools in Lithuania were collected.

The data analysis. The procedure of content data analysis was applied, which allowed covering information of large volume as well as grouping research data into sub-categories and categories in terms of their content and meaning, formulating conclusions based on the obtained empiric data.

### ***Theoretical Underpinnings of the Factors that Promote Formation of Adolescents’ National Identity***

The formation of adolescents’ national identity is a complex process predetermined by various educational and social aspects. For example, following the specifics of the period of adolescence, adolescents are regarded as a part of the society that already develops autonomy and forms an individual circle in the social environment but at the same time is still not dissociated from the childhood situations. The Ecological Systems Theory developed by Bronfenbrenner is of high importance analysing socio-educational factors that have influence on adolescents’ national identity. The environment consists of concentrated structures, which are interdependent and located within each other and, thus, constitute an integrated environmental whole\_(Shelton, 2019).



Created according to Shelton (2019)

The factors that are attributed to microsystem are closest to the child and constitute a part of learner’s environment. The family is considered to be the first and the most natural environment of the child’s (self-)development, which not only transfers behaviour norms and stereotypes but also forms values and ensures their passing down from generation to generation. This is an environment, where a child grows up, develops and gets educated, takes over the family’s life style and culture (Binh, 2012; Jezierska-Wiejak, 2014).

**Mesosystem**, when two or more microsystems interact, is seen as a significant element in forming adolescents’ national identity. This is a relation-grounded system. The school is seen as an important factor, which ensures national education, creation of the nation’s future prospects, especially when new values emerge from the processes of globalisation and confront with traditional values and growing emigration of young people (Wang, 2007; Duoblienė, 2009; Swadźba, 2011). In such circumstances, the role of teacher acquires utmost importance as

the teacher is able to contribute to continuity and nurturance of learners' national identity, when national education is regarded as a part of general competences and is approached as a relevant element in training teachers of different study fields. Formal education, as a component of Lithuanian educational system, should be noted as it is a targeted educational process characterised by goals and specific activity themes and particularly focused on development of social and general competences as well as on meeting self-expression needs. Non-formal education is also significant and it may embrace the life of school's community, when national festival, traditional events and various projects are organised. One of the most important aspects of non-formal education in the (self-) development of national identity is experiential knowledge acquisition and this is linked with education of independent, responsible and improving personality.

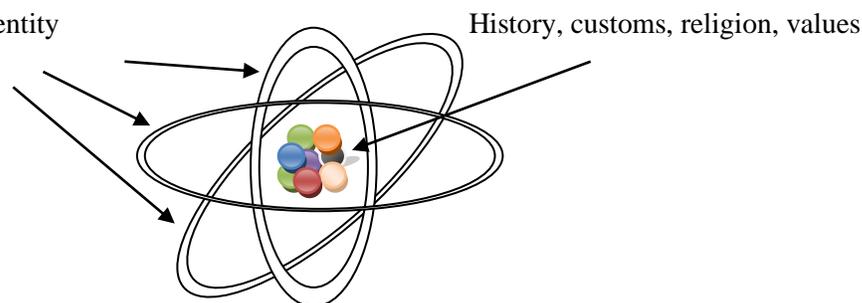
Formation of national identity may be significantly influenced by peers, who are of almost importance in adolescence because according to Phinney, Romero, Nava, Huang (2001); Santos, Kornienko, eds. (2017)\_search for the identity and self-realisation occurs among peers as well.

In this mesosystem case interpretative communities acquire importance, when communities themselves understand what is important for a specific community and how it should be interpreted. According to O. Tījūnėlienė (2005), in such cases national personalities-authorities (poets, philosophers, writers, and representatives of different fields of science) are ascribed a significant role in educating the younger generation. The world of the media can help to unite the scattered nation as it enables the establishment and maintenance of the connections among the members of the nation (Chan, 2006; Georgiou and Gumpert, 2006).

**The factors that predetermine exosystem**—the state— is another important factor determining the (self-) development of national identity, where a particular role is attributed to the system of education. According to M. Lukšienė (2000), the system of education is liable for providing proper conditions for an individual to achieve a high level of culture, as well as a creative, flexible, critical and constructive relation to own national culture.

The factors that comprise **macrosystem** are linked with the prevailing culture and religion, values.

Expression of national identity



The social cultural model of Ruhu's national identity(according M. Vanderwer, 2009)

This model recognizes and does not negate the collective memory of the nation, which consists of history, customs, native language, religion, but the author does not exclude the possibility of transformation of the nation's heritage. According to the author of the model, the above-mentioned change is symbolized by protons revolving around national culture.

### ***The Research Results***

The quantitative research data highlighted the aspects that constitute microsystem. The family. The analysis of scholarly literature allowed stating that parents' educational background is important for formation of adolescents' national identity in certain aspects. Namely parents with higher education are strongly engaged in the school's life and are its active participants. All this can be linked to children's academic achievements and their future perspective. Seeking to highlight the **importance of parents' educational background**, ANOVA of one factor was calculated.

It was established that higher level of school learners' knowledge of national culture depends on educational background of both parents, when post-secondary education statistically significantly differ from secondary and lower education ( $p = 0.005$ ), higher education significantly differs from post-secondary ( $p = 0.001$ ), secondary and lower education ( $p = 0.000$ ).

The same situation was observed referring to higher education of the father and knowledge of ethnic culture. The mother tongue used in the family is thought to contribute to maintenance and nurturance of national identity. Therefore, seeking to identify if **the mother tongue** is used at home can have importance to expression and formation of adolescents' national identity, the Student's t criterion was calculated. The research data revealed that school students, who speak only Lithuanian at home, possess slightly better knowledge of national culture ( $M = 1.8791$ ;  $p = 0.009$ ); cultural and historical memory ( $M = 1.7464$ ;  $p = 0.017$ ); spread of mother tongue ( $M = 1.3868$ ;  $p = 0.008$ ); national loyalty ( $M = 1.3529$ ,  $p = 0.001$ ) and the

Lithuanian language used at home only for sports does not have any influence. Two or three languages used at home may express the family's link not to one but several nations.

Further calculation of the Student's t criterion allowed establishing several statistically significant differences among factors that comprise national identity and **the mother's or the father's nationality**. The research data show that the mother's Lithuanian nationality ( $M = 1.8899$ ;  $p = 0.032$ ) has influence on the adolescents' knowledge, i.e. the mother tongue, the nation's history, ethnic culture. The same is said about the national loyalty ( $M = 1.3731$ ;  $p = 0.021$ ).

The father's nationality is less important to the expression and formation of 9th-10th formers' national identity because it was established that the father's (caregiver's) Lithuanian nationality ( $M = 1.8971$ ;  $p = 0.025$ ) has impact only on the knowledge of national culture (the mother tongue, national history, ethnic culture).

Mesosystem. The school. The variables that consist of more than two groups prevailed in the quantitative research. In such case, seeking to establish statistically significant differences between the factors and the above-mentioned variables, ANOVA of one factor was calculated. The mean difference is statistically significant, when  $p \leq 0.05$ . Namely this statistical method was applied analysing the importance of respondents' average of marks to expression and formation of national identity. This statistical analysis shows that all the factors distinguished in the work were best evaluated by the learners with highest academic achievements. The respondents, who get high marks (9-10 points), more frequently take part in national activities compared to the respondents who receive 7-8 ( $p = 0.017$ ), 6 and lower marks ( $p = 0.001$ ). Experiences that are related to cultural and historical memory also depend on highest academic achievements. The learners, who get high marks (9-10 points) also express their national loyalty or experiences related to the spread of mother tongue stronger.

As it has been mentioned in the theoretical part, the role of school in forming national identity is not questioned. The statistically significant differences were established between the school learners' attitude towards school and the factors determining the national identity.

The attitude of school learners towards school is an important factor that predetermines formation of adolescents' national identity. The presented information allows concluding that school learners, who distinguish the high quality process of education at school, are more actively engaged into national activities compared to school learners, who are indifferent to their school ( $p = 0.019$ ).

The school students, who emphasise the high quality process of education at school, possesses better knowledge of the national culture compared to the ones, who firstly underline external factors of educational institution ( $p = 0.036$ ) or declare their indifference to school ( $p = 0.000$ ).

The factor "Cultural and historical memory" is better expressed among school learners, who emphasise relations with teachers or peers ( $p = 0.046$ ), high quality education process ( $p = 0.001$ ) or the school as a part of Lithuanian culture ( $p = 0.006$ ).

The feeling of spread of mother tongue and national loyalty are better revealed by the school learners, who stressed the high quality process of education, positively evaluated relations with peers and teachers as well as emphasised the school as a part of Lithuanian culture. It should be pointed out that these factors statistically significantly differed from the ones demonstrated by the school learners, who expressed indifference to school. This shows that it is important for learners to get to know the school, its activities, to engage into the educational process and not only to focus on external school aspects.

The factors that enhance development of adolescents' national identity were revealed in the qualitative research. The thoughts expressed by the adolescents' learning in Lithuanian schools in Lithuanian allowed highlighting the importance of "**Factors located in microsystem**". It is obvious that parents contribute to development of their

child's identity because she or he identifies with them firstly. However, following the data of qualitative research it can be stated that the family as an inherent factor has a twofold effect on formation of adolescents' national identity. Firstly, the sub-category "**Family engagement**" should be mentioned, which is linked to contribution of the family to formation of the respondents' national identity. The research participants stated that they involve in **nurturance of nation's history**: "Nurturance of nationality has become a tradition. We are taking part in various events, festivals and commemorations with our family. To know the past of the nation is just wonderful. I like that young people (my age) want to remember and are interested in the past of Lithuania" (No. 17). Together with family they also take part in "**Nurturance of ethnic culture**". It is stated that: "My family and I celebrate festivals that are related to the past of Lithuania" (No. 33); "We celebrate various festivals in a national way with my family" (No. 56). A small number of school learners state that they participate in "**Nurturance of mother tongue**". For example, the participant in the research points out: "We cherish the Lithuanian language with the family" (No. 616). Another participant claims: "The whole family try to speak correct Lithuanian and not to use any barbarisms"(No. 622). However, "**Indifference of family towards engagement in nurturance of nationality**" was also observed: "My family does not uphold nationality because its members are disappointed with the state"(No. 728); "My family and I are not engaged in nurturance of nationality"(No. 275).

**Mesosystem.** "**Factors located in microsystem**" consists of the sub-category "**National initiatives at school**" also prevails revealing the importance of educational institutions while forming the national identity. The research data revealed activities of ethnic nurturance organised at school. The respondents mentioned that: "Various events are held at school (the most memorable thing is this festive feeling)" (No. 56). A few school learners mentioned that they take part in events dedicated to nurturance of national history. This proves that activities of this character are organised but adolescents do not tend to actively engage in them. "I take part in events dedicated to Lithuania, commemoration of its independence. Last year we organised an event to commemorate 16th February" (No. 582). "**Positive role of teacher**" is also distinguished: "I think Lithuanians are not getting worse but, on the contrary, more and more good people appear. Let us take a few people as an example. The leader of the club is an ordinary student, who dedicates his leisure time to children and only gets a few litas for that, although hundreds of children come to the club every week. Another person, who is worth respect is our teacher of Lithuanian. She will always help even if it is not convenient for her"(No. 110).

**Also mesosystem is determined** by the sub-category "**Public projects**", which is particularly important for building the national identity. The following ideas of school learners should be mentioned: "There are such organisations as "Maistobankas" (The Food Bank, "Ateitininkai" (Catholic Youth Organisation), "Maltosordinas" (Order of Malta). I have also heard about expeditions to Vorkuta to visit the places where Lithuanians and representatives of other nations were exiled as well graveyards and to honour our grandparents and great-grandparents" (No. 116). "**Stories of famous personalities**" are considered to be particularly important accidental factors, which are best visible in the public: "Not long ago three lecturers arrived at our school, who told us about Lithuanians who were in Germany. Namely in Germany the exiled Lithuanians fought for freedom and everything. Our nation is very strong. We all know such festival as 13th January, 11th March, which have been celebrated now" (No. 109).

"**National activities of local community**" revealed that the research participants engage in activities of their towns: "Impressions: singing of the national anthem was held on the foothill one year in Ukmergė (this is the town I live in). I really enjoyed the event because a lot of people gathered together, though the weather was not very good. This only proved once again that this is important for Lithuanians" (No. 298).

## Conclusion

On the basis of the results of the research, it was found that the factors that express the microsystem are predominant. The results of the conducted research highlight several aspects that reveal the significance of the family: stronger national identity is characteristic of school learners, whose mother or father are of Lithuanian nationality. The national identity of adolescents is also stronger expressed, when only the Lithuanian language is spoken in families. The research data show that the importance of school is not questioned. The school has to be a part of Lithuanian culture, where national culture has to be nurtured. Stronger expression of national identity is observed among learners with higher academic achievements. It can be assumed that this aspect guarantees an educated, critically thinking, responsible personality, which perceives the meaning of the nation.

The mesosystem is revealed by the relationship between family and school. The importance of local communities is also highlighted. The analysis of scholarly literature sources allows emphasising the relevance of interpretative communities in forming national identity. It is obvious that the results of the conducted research confirm this ideas as the importance of well-known personalities is obvious. The school students do not disassociate themselves from the closest society and highlight national activities of local communities. This is particularly important to individuals living in emigration centres. A considerable number of adolescents emphasise public projects. Although their activities are oriented towards citizenship, this shows that initiatives of this kind are attractive to contemporary school learners.

The exosystem is revealed on the basis of state policy. The focus is laid on formal as well as on non-formal education. Non-formal education, as an integral part of Lithuanian educational system, plays a relevant role in forming adolescents' national identity as it focuses on development of social and general competences and meeting self-expression needs. In the context of formal education the school learners indicate the high quality process of education and the high average of marks.

The results of the research didn't show the importance of macrosystem. In this case, the pupils do not see the significance of religion, culture or public values in the formation of national identity. It is understood that both religion, culture and values must be permeated at other levels (the microsystem, the mesosystem, the exosystem). However, it is important that the individual understands the importance of individual dialogue with culture, religion, public values and attitudes.

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