

Gender Differences in Identity Features and Self-Determination Process

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Abstract

This article describes the results of the investigation which was conducted among adult Russian males and females. The purpose of the investigation was to describe the gender differences of identity and self-determination process. In this investigation we also confirmed our model of identity statuses that was elaborated on the base of Marcia's model. Forty-five people were interviewed. The results indicate that women have the identity status 'open stable identity' more often than men ($p < 0.05$), and it is accompanied by the more intensive process of self-determination ($p < 0.05$). The identity status 'closed stable identity' is more typical for men ($p < 0.05$), and is associated with the weakening of the desire for change that may hinder the process of self-determination and self-development. For women, the main stimulus of self-determination is the family's welfare, and for men the main stimulus is self-development and achievement of status in society. Based on these results, we elaborated a program of individual coaching for women, which promotes open innovation processes and self-determination. The results can be also used in family therapy and occupational counseling.

Keywords: self-determination, identity status, social identity, personal identity, decision-making, gender differences

The problem of self-determination seems to be very popular in contemporary psychology. The interest in this problem in Russia is determined by social changes, which have caused a need to understand self-determination in the new social context. On the one hand, due to the so called 'speed social changes' in all spheres of life (economic, technical, social, political, and others), people experience identity crisis and the need to determine themselves in the new environment. On the other hand, the development of free market economy in Russia leads to increasing of competition and high demands in the labor market. The specific set of personal qualities that enable a person to be successfully integrated into a complex social environment is in demand: these are flexibility, dynamics, mobility, ability to learn new methods.

In these circumstances, gender differences play a specific role. In Russia, as in many other countries, men and women legally have equal rights in all spheres of life, including the professional one. But in fact, the society offers certain stereotypes of professional activities related to gender differences. Thus, the professions related to the active political and public leadership role are traditionally defined as 'male', and they are characterized by behavioral repertoire full of masculine behavioral patterns. Women choosing these professions must accept the masculine self-image and incorporate it into their identity. That is why the problem of identity and self-determination may be more difficult for women, especially for those who make career in business, than it is for men.

Russian psychologists consider self-determination in different aspects: a) a conscious act of decision-making in problem situations; b) an internal activity, which gives a certainty to personality; c) a conscious process of analysis, decision, checking representations of themselves in problem situations; d) a process of self-realization in a social context (Ermolaeva, 2011; Ivanova, 2011; Klimov, 1996; Pryazhnikov, 1996). Professional self-determination as a sort of self-determination is understood as the personality growth in vocational activities (Klimov, 1996). European and American psychologists consider self-determination to be a sort of motivation and self-regulation, but they also analyze it in connection with the problem of individual choice (Deci & Ryan, 2000; Schwarz, 2000).

Several researchers emphasize the crucial role of identity in the deployment of self-determination. For example, Ermolaeva (2011) considers identity to be a central part of professional development. She includes the individual, operational and social components into the structure of professional identity, bringing the problem of professional identity into the broader social context. However, she does not analyze the types and stages of identity in connection with the problem of professional self-determination. Soenens and Vansteenkiste (2011) underline the importance of motives and goals of identity formation, and claim that identity may vary in congruency to a person's basic growth tendencies of the self. But they do not describe these variations in terms of identity statuses or types.

In our investigation, we considered professional self-determination to be the decision-making process in a professional context, and identity to be the result of the process of self-determination. We also elaborated on the typology of identity statuses based on the model of Marcia (1980). This model includes four identity statuses, and among them only one, the achieved identity, is connected with the self-determination process.

The purpose of our investigation was to analyze the gender differences in identity and self-determination process among adult Russian males and females. The results of the investigation can be used for creating individual coaching and family therapy programs for Russian men and women.

The problem of self-determination in contemporary psychology

There are two different approaches to considering self-determination in Russian and Western psychology. In the Western (European and American) tradition, self-determination is considered as a sort of motivation when a person makes his/her own choice without any external influence. Self-determination theory (SDT) was created by Deci and Ryan (2000) and focused on the degree of self-motivated behavior. The SDT identifies three needs, which constitute the basis of self-motivated behavior: competence, autonomy and psychological relatedness. Intrinsic motivation occurs when these needs and inner personal resources are supported during prior development.

Some other investigations also analyze the problem of self-determination in connection with the problem of choice. For example, Schwarz (2000) considers that the more freedom of choice people have, the less rational the choice becomes and therefore more excessive the self-determination becomes.

In Russian psychology, self-determination is considered not in terms of motivation but in terms of self-identification (Klimov, 1996; Ivanova, 2011; Pryazhnikov, 1999; Zeer, 2003). It is the process of conscious activity aimed at understanding one's own personality and the purposes of one's own existence. The following are the main kinds of self-determination: a) life self-determination, (understanding of life purposes); b) personal self-determination (the awareness of one's personality); c) professional self-determination, which is understood as awareness of professional goals and identification with professional roles (Pryazhnikov, 1996, 1999).

Professional self-determination is usually understood by Russian researchers as personal growth in the context of vocational activities. For example, Klimov (1996) defines professional self-determination as a human activity that takes a particular content depending on the stage of the person's development as the subject of work. Pryazhnikov emphasizes values and semantics as very important aspects of the professional self-determination process. He also notes that "the essence of professional self-determination is an independent and informed search for meanings in work and life in a particular historical and cultural (socio-economic) situation" (Pryazhnikov, 1996, p. 16). Zeer (2003) underlines that professional self-determination is facilitated by different events. It is connected with the conscious choice of profession in certain psychological and socio-economic conditions.

Several researchers highlight the crucial role of professional identity in the deployment of the process of professional self-determination. For example, Shneyder (2004) defines professional identity as "the psychological category, which refers to the awareness of belonging to a particular profession and specific professional community" (p. 113). However, she considers that professional identity is the integration of personal and social identity in a professional context and that it is not confined to one's own professionalism. Ermolaeva (2011) includes individual, operational, and social components into the structure of professional identity. This idea involves the problem of professional identity in a broad social context. Ermolaeva (2011) also proposes the notion of 'professional marginalism' as the opposite of professional identity. Professional marginalism occurs when there is a conflict between the components of professional identity.

The term 'professional-personal self-determination' represents the interrelationships between professional and personal self-determination. The professional-personal determination affects

the following areas of personality: a) the motivational sphere, b) the cognitive sphere, c) behavior, d) the reflective sphere, and e) the value-sense sphere. This approach emphasizes the inextricable link between professional and personal self-determination. Professional self-determination in its close relationship with personal development was considered by Pryazhnikov and Pryazhnikova (2004). The researchers relate the concept of ‘professional self-determination’ with terms such as ‘self-actualization’, ‘self-realization’, and ‘self-transcendence’. Professional and personal self-determination, according to the researchers, appear in close relationship and merge in their higher manifestations. The essence of professional self-determination, according to Pryazhnikov (1996) is a conscious search for meaning in professional activities in the context of a specific social, economic and cultural-historical situation. The core of professional self-determination is the internal readiness to plan and implement future personal and professional development.

Pryazhnikov (1996) does not draw clear boundaries between professional, life and personal self-determination; however, he determines the following features of these processes:

a) professional self-determination is more formal, and depends on the environment (social inquiry, respectively corresponding organizations, equipment, etc.);

b) self-determination of life is more global and covers the whole life and lifestyle of the person in the specific cultural and economic environment. At the same time, it depends on the stereotypes of the public consciousness of the cultural environment, on economic, social, environmental and other ‘objective’ factors determining the life of the social and professional groups;

c) personal self-determination is impossible to formalize; it develops in complex, as opposed to favourable, circumstances, from which the best personal qualities of the person emerge. At the same time, self-determination is a conscious process of analysis, deciding, and checking the strength of one’s own position, and the representations of oneself in problem situations.

Considering self-determination as “a problematic situation, which determines a change of life circumstances and triggers the appropriate activity aimed at choice” (Ivanova, 2009, p. 95), Ivanova (2009) comes to the conclusion that the process of self-determination in a social or professional environment is close to the decision-making process in its content and meaning. Thus, the main function of self-determination is the preparation and adoption of the optimal solution for a person’s future prospects in the context of the problem situation. In this case, self-determination acts as the process of solving tasks on different levels of complexity and importance for the individual. In the course of this process the number of alternatives reduces. The identity is the “inner frame” of the selection process; it is at the same time a basis and a result of self-determination. Thus, Ivanova (2009) concludes that the process of social and professional self-determination should be considered on two levels: in terms of the construction of social and professional identity, and in terms of the individual characteristics of decision-making (Ivanova, 2011, 2009).

Based on Ivanova’s model of self-determination, we believe that self-determination is the process of learning about oneself by taking deliberate action, based on selection decisions regarding ‘Self’. However, we believe that social and professional self-determination is inextricably linked to personal self-determination.

Identity Status and Self-determination

Previously, we analyzed the different identity models, and developed a model of identity based on the views of Erikson, Breakwell, and Marcia (Antonova, 1997). This model was the basis of our further researches. As a basic definition of identity, we adopted the definitions of Erikson (1968), Marcia (1980) and Breakwell (1986), slightly modified it: identity is a system of self-representations, beliefs, values, life goals, which a person subjectively experiences as a sense of continuity of his/her personality, and perceives other people as recognizing his/her identity as well. In this research, we understand identity as a complex personal system, which includes self-concept, detailed in the time perspective (past, present, and future I), as well as goals, values and beliefs of the individual.

Based on the model of identity, described in papers of Breakwell (1986) and Marcia (1980), we identified the following structural components of identity:

- 1) Cognitive dimension: includes all the features that people use to describe themselves. Cognitive dimension includes social and personal components. Personal identity is the self-categorization in terms of physical and personality traits; social identity is the self-categorization in terms of group membership.
- 2) Estimated dimension: every element of the identity is assessed by the person, according to internalized norms and values.
- 3) The time dimension of identity: implies that identity development moves in terms of subjective time. Individual self-concepts are the vertical slices of the structure at different time periods. That is, unlike Tajfel (Tajfel & Turner, 1986), we consider the self-concept as a component of identity; the latter combines individual sections of the self-concept (I – past, I – present, I – future) into a united system, which gives a person a sense of self-continuation.

Cognitive dimension of identity extends over a person's life. Actual elements of identity are not static, neither are their structural organization. They change following a change in the social context. People differ in the degree of coherence of identity elements. Some people have a strict hierarchical structure of identity, others – a chaotic set of individual elements.

We recognize the social determinism of identity and connection between social and personal identity, so we concentrate on the component, which was called by Ermolaeva (2011) as 'individual', recognizing the existence of other components, but not accentuating them.

In developing the model of identity types (statuses), we relied on the status model of Marcia (Marcia, 1980; Kroger, Martinussen & Marcia, 2010), in which there are four statuses or conditions of identity. According to Marcia (1970), identity is a dynamic system of needs, abilities, beliefs, and individual history. The key point of his theory is the idea that this structure is manifested phenomenologically through the patterns of 'problem-solving'. In fact, every life problem to be solved by people contributes to the formation and development of identity through the formation of so-called 'identity units'. As the identity structure expands, the degree of self-awareness, goal-orientation and understanding the meaning of life increases. In our view, the patterns of 'problem-solving' are phenomenological content of the process of self-determination and may be considered as indicators of its presence.

Marcia identified four identity statuses. To construct his model he used two variables: 1) the presence or absence of crisis – the state of search for identity, and 2) the presence or absence of identity units – personally meaningful goals, values, beliefs.

The four identity statuses according to Marcia's model are:

1. Identity Achievement. People who have experienced the period of crisis and self-exploration and formed definite units of significant goals, values and beliefs, have this status.
2. Identity Moratorium. Marcia uses this term after Erickson in relation to a person in a state of identity crisis and those who actively try to solve it, attempt different options.
3. Identity Foreclosure. This status is attributed to the person who has never suffered a crisis of identity, but nevertheless has a specific set of goals, values and beliefs. The content and strength of these identity elements may be the same that achieved identity has, but the way of formation differs. Premature identity elements are formed relatively early in life, not as a result of self-search and selection, but mainly due to identification with parents or other significant people. Thus taken goals, values, and beliefs may be similar to the parent or may reflect the expectations of the parents.
4. Identity Diffusion. Such a state of identity is typical for people who do not have strong goals, values and beliefs, and are not trying to actively shape them. They have not yet made commitments. They have never come through identity crisis, or have been unable to solve problems. In the absence of a clear sense of identity, people may experience a number of adverse conditions, including pessimism, apathy, depression, undirected anger, alienation, anxiety, feelings of helplessness and hopelessness (Marcia, 1980).

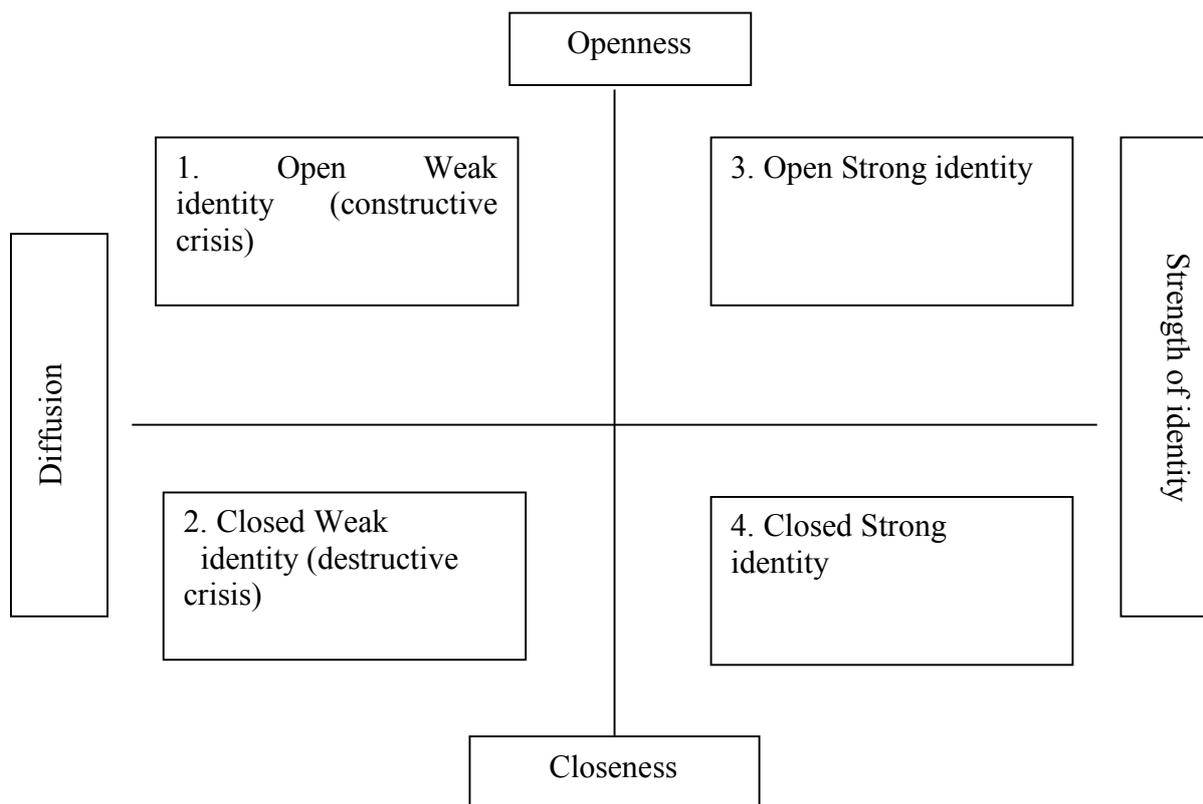
The above statuses are not stages and should not be considered as a consequential process.

Marcia believed that identity develops throughout a person's life (Marcia, 1980, 1970). He distinguished two ways to achieve identity:

- 1) Gradual realization of certain personal data (name, nationality, availability capabilities, etc.) – this path leads to the formation of the assigned or premature identity;
- 2) Independent human decisions about their lives – this way leads to the formation of the constructed or achieved identity. Identity crisis, as a rule, does not encompass the whole of human life, and focuses on a limited number of issues in specific spheres of life. Thus, in every moment of life a person has mixed state identity and its attribution to a particular status is rather arbitrary.

Based on Marcia's ego-identity status model, we developed our own typology of identity statuses (Antonova, 1997). We have identified two parameters that can be used to describe the state of identity: 1) the 'strength' of identity – which characterizes the degree of commitment, the degree of self-determination and self-awareness, 2) openness – willingness to change, to accept and take a new social environment. The combination of these parameters provides the following types (statuses) of identity (Fig. 1).

Figure 1: Identity Statuses Model (Antonova, 1997)



Types 1 and 2 are the crisis zones, but identity crisis can take place in different ways. While the person maintains the openness he starts looking for a new personal self-categorization, which is impossible without self-changing. In the case of enhancing the protection of existing ‘Self’, the personal closeness and rejection of change leads to the development of the crisis in a destructive direction with negative emotional consequences for the individual (depression, loss of meaning, etc.).

Types 3 and 4 are the regions of stable, strong, ‘achieved’ (by Marcia) identity, when identity units are formed, personal goals and values are realized. However, the identity cannot be ‘achieved’ once and for all: if the person stops further searches of himself, regress begins – and it is the way back to crisis. Thus, only identity type 3, while maintaining the openness, provides the actual stability. Identity type 4, while maintaining or enhancing closeness, sooner or later goes in type 2 – destructive crisis.

The process of self-determination occupies a key position in our model of identity, as in the model of Marcia (1980), and that is the ability to choose identity elements. The analysis of theoretical studies of self-determination and identity leads to the conclusion of their phenomenological proximity. Structural components of self-determination are actually repeated identity components. However, self-determination is considered to be a process, while identity a state that results from this process.

Based on the analysis of Marcia’s status model and different ideas of identity formation, self-awareness, and self-relation (Ivanova, 2007; Breakwell, 1986; Bosma, 1985), we have identified the following mechanisms of identity formation:

- Identification with significant others, which results in an uncritical, often unconscious acceptance of values, beliefs, attitudes of significant others (especially parents). This is the main mechanism of ‘identity foreclosure’ formation.
- Internalization of opinions, statements of others about themselves – this is a mechanism of forming a so-called ‘indirect’ or ‘mirror Self’, that is, representations of the persons about themselves, their qualities and characteristics, based on the opinion of others about themselves. This mechanism also works on the formation of ‘identity foreclosure’.
- Self-determination – making decisions about own qualities, beliefs, goals and values. Self-determination is the most complicated process; it starts during the identity crisis and results in the formation of identity. On an emotional level, self-determination may manifest itself in complex and ambivalent emotions, in which painful experiences of finding solutions to problems can be accompanied by a sense of creative inspiration.

Thus, the dynamics of identity can be represented as follows:

1. Diffuse identity is the starting point of identity development. However, it does not last long as a starting point of identity formation. A baby really does not know who ‘he’ is, but from birth he begins to explain it. This process includes identification processes (the earliest mechanism) and internalization; the ‘identity foreclosure’ is forming in this manner. We believe that in general, a three-year-old child already has identity foreclosure. However, this does not mean that diffuse identity disappears forever; this state is returning every time during identity crisis, though, apparently, on a different level. The state of diffusion may indicate the beginning of an identity crisis.

2. Identity foreclosure, as already noted, is formed by the action of identification and internalization processes, and can survive for quite a long time. Most authors following Erikson believe that the identity crisis is a mandatory characteristic of adolescence. But it is possible to see both adolescents and adults retaining their identity foreclosure without any attempts of self-determination. Perhaps this is due to certain violations of family education (e.g. hyperprotection) or some personal characteristics (conformity, high level of self-monitoring, etc.), but these assumptions need empirical verification.

3. Identity crisis is a special state of the individual, which is based on a conflict between the particular elements of identity or between identity elements and the elements of the environment (including the biological organization of the individual). These contradictions can for some time not be realized by the individual, because of action of protective mechanisms (e.g., denial), helping to restore and maintain emotional balance. Any controversy in cognitions, according to the balance theories, cause negative emotional states, as it requires changes in the cognitive structure.

Identity crisis inevitably arises in every human life, as both individual and environment are constantly changing, and these changes occur unevenly in different areas of the individual and the environment. Thus, the emergence of contradictions is inevitable. However, the crisis could lead to different results in terms of the identity dynamics. The key personal feature, in our opinion, is the ‘openness’, that is the ability of the person to be open to changes. Usually openness decreases with age and with the acquisition of professional stereotypes (Antonova,

1997). That is why the identity crisis usually proceeds more difficultly for people who are older.

The first option of coping strategies is to eliminate the contradiction by eliminating dissonant elements (for example, by isolation a person can eliminate the contradiction between his own values and the values of the social environment).

The second option of coping with crisis is including the mechanisms of protection and denial of the crisis. It can occur when a person is closed to changes. In some cases, an individual can save former state of identity for a long time. In this case, we name the identity status 'closed stable identity'. But over time, the contradictions can intensify and a time of 'breakthrough' of the crisis in the sphere of consciousness may come – while maintaining of closeness in this case sets the status 'closed unstable identity', or a destructive crisis. Unwillingness to change with all the growing tensions, which are subjectively experienced as a 'problem', leads to increased negative emotional states up to depression and even suicide.

The third option is switching on the processes of self-determination as 'problem-solving' patterns. This raises other emotional dynamics: along with negative emotions, which accompany the rejection of former identity elements, the individual may experience moments of emotional recovery, knitted with creative search of himself, his goals and values. We call this option the constructive crisis, as it leads to the formation of new units of identity. The earlier described identity state we call 'unstable open identity'.

4. Achieved (strong open) identity can be formed only by the passage of a constructive crisis. But as this is kept open, there is willingness and even a tendency to change, so it is impossible to talk about stability in the sense of long-term existence of such a state. Rather, this identity status could be called 'constructive stable identity crisis' that is a constant self-transformation associated with the work on own self, the decision for all emerging problems, but not accompanied by negative emotional states.

In the situation of increasingly accelerating social changes, which we have seen in recent decades in Russia, only such identity status can provide the proper functioning of a person in society, and at the same time the fullest realization of a person's potential. Thus, the introduction of 'openness' as a dimension of identity allows us to overcome the contradiction noted by Ermolaeva (2011), between the need to maintain a stable identity and subjective well-being of the person on the one hand, and the need to adapt to the changing conditions of the social environment on the other.

This assumption is especially true with regard to people working in business, as this is an area where most people experience uncertainty and the need for decision-making at high risk (Ivanova, 2009, 2011).

Gender and Identity

Gender determines the kind of social identity called gender identity. Gender identity is most stable and one of the most important among all kinds of social identities. Once the person determines himself/herself as a man (e.g. masculine) or a woman (e.g. feminine), he or she begins to internalize the gender demands of the society.

Various studies have revealed that the male role has traditionally been considered as instrumental and active, and the female as expressive and communicative. It was found in experimental studies that men tend to the instrumental style (focus on problem solving), and women are more emotional, with a tendency to focus on feelings, emotions, the desire for the manifestation of emotions and sharing them with others (Bendas, 2006). However, it is believed that the female style of work is more flexible; women are more open and sociable than men. Men are often dismissed from leadership positions because of the lack of flexibility in dealing with subordinates, while women generally praised for their good interaction with the staff. Ilyin showed that the 'real woman' is rather weak, vulnerable, unstable, and more impulsive; and the 'real man', on the contrary, is super normative, emotionally stable and completely pleased with himself (Ilyin, 2002).

Gender studies have appeared also in organizational research. Currently, business involves more women, and they often become successful entrepreneurs and competitors for men, but female managers often face specific difficulties. Employees do not recognize them as leaders, and male employees oppose them. Women face more obstacles in career advancement than men. There is the possibility of gender conflict in organizations: for example, between the female and male chief subordinates, who do not recognize her right for leadership. Evaluation of the managers' effectiveness is based on male criteria, which leads to the imposition of masculine norms on women's business styles. But the emergence of a large number of women in the business world is changing attitudes towards masculine values, and they are more likely to be re-evaluated.

Gender can be connected with some identity features which are important factors of career development in management. Identity is an important component of self-consciousness, which largely determines the behavior of the individual, and his or her thoughts and feelings.

Some investigations give the evidences of gender differences in identity features. In the study of college students (Bilsker & Marcia, 1991), researchers showed that women may have a greater disposition towards adaptively regressive experience. The authors believe that these gender differences might reflect a greater reliance on subjectivism among women, allowing greater access to adaptive regression as a means of identity formation. The results also show evidence that the identity status Moratorium is more typical for women than men, but the differences are not statistically significant. In another investigation (Farhana et al., 2010), the results showed that males scored highest in identity achievement status, while females scored highest on the moratorium identity status. An investigation of Russian medical students (Cerkovsky, 2008) showed that young women have more mature identity, and more often than young men of the same age have the status of achieved identity. At the same time, gender identity is more important for women than for men as another attribute of global identity, but they determine themselves mostly emotionally and subjectively, while men determine themselves using more objective criteria. Thus, these results suggest that there is a significant association between gender and identity status, though the conclusions are rather contradictory.

All the described investigations were made from samples of adolescents and college students, but we supposed that among adults there may also be gender differences in identity status and self-determination.

In our study, based on the model of identity dynamics described above, we are investigating the gender differences in identity status and self-determination among people working in business. So the purpose of our investigation is to identify and describe these differences.

The hypotheses are:

- 1) Women are more oriented to personal identity features than men;
- 2) Women have, more often than men, the identity status ‘strong open identity’; and
- 3) The self-determination process among women is determined by higher orientation of women to family values and interpersonal relations.

Method

Participants

The participants were people working in different business organizations in Russia (Moscow), 45 people (31 women and 14 men).

The recruitment was carried out among people visiting personal coaching sessions and groups from a so-called ‘business incubator’ which was created to support business startups. Participation was voluntary; all respondents gave the permission for using their data in the investigation. The age of participants was 18-50 years, (average 28.6). The professional status was mostly managers in business companies and six people were business owners. We didn’t consider the type of business in this investigation. The participants’ work experience was one-19 years (average 6.7).

Procedure and Instruments

All participants filled out the questionnaires that included two sections. The first section was ‘Who am I?’ by Kuhn and McPartlend (1954), which we used to study the identity status. For the purposes of our investigation, we modified the processing procedures for the results (Antonova, 1997). The instruction for the test ‘Who am I?’ was the following: “You have to give 20 different answers to the question ‘Who am I?’” After the respondents wrote all the answers, they were asked to note the modality of each statement: + if I like this feature, I take it as a positive; - If I do not like it; 0 – if I’m neutral to this characteristic.

For processing the results, we used content analysis of the texts, and counted the total number of statements (respondents could give both less and more than 20 characteristics), as well as the number of positive, neutral, and negative characteristics. The categories of content-analysis were the following: 1) social roles (they were divided into general, gender, family, professional and other roles); 2) individual personal statements (appearance, communication, love, interests, goals, personal features, and emotional state). We also counted the indicators of crisis of diffusion such as: negative emotions (‘I’m depressed’); indicators of diffusion (for example, such phrases as ‘I don’t know who I am’); personal search (“I’m trying to understand what I need and who I am”), and the adjectives which are, according to Kuhn and McPartlend (1954), the indicators of crisis (especially if they are used as the first answers).

We used the expert survey to determine what statements can be indicators of each of the identity statuses according to our model. As the result of this survey, we allocated the following indicators of the identity statuses:

1) The level of identity differentiation, which is the measure of the total number of statements. High differentiation (15-20 statements) indicates a strong identity. A low level of differentiation (1-5 statements) may indicate the presence of a destructive identity crisis. A very high level of differentiation (more than 20 statements, while respondents often asked ‘can I still write more?’) usually shows people in a state of constructive identity crisis, ‘the search for self’ (this is very common among teenagers).

2) The ratio of social-role and individual personal statements. Social-role statements include: general roles (‘man’), family roles (‘mother’, ‘son’), professional roles (‘manager’), other roles (‘passenger’, ‘reader’). The predominance of role characteristics may indicate a predominance of social identification, which can be a sign of being closed to changes. The predominance of individual personality characteristics, especially in the form of adjectives (‘smart’, ‘kind’, ‘caring’) may indicate, on the contrary, the predominance of personal identification and opening a new search for identity elements. However, the presence of personality characteristics in the form of the adjectives in the first three positions in the list of qualities may indicate the presence of a crisis, which requires confirmation by other methods.

3) The ratio of positive and negative self-descriptions. People usually use no more than 1/3 of negative self-characteristics of all the statements (Kuhn & McPartlend, 1954). Having more negative statements may indicate the presence of low self-esteem and a destructive crisis.

4) Timing parameters of identity. People usually write answers in this test in the present tense. Answers ‘in the past’ (called ‘prospective identity’) – for example, “I was once a happy man” – may indicate negative trends of crisis. In contrast, the presence of characteristics ‘in the future’ (perspective identity) may indicate strong time perspective and a ‘strong’ identity.

5) The presence of words indicating a crisis, even if they are rare, may indicate the presence of an identity crisis. A constructive crisis is accompanied by an active search for identity elements (“I do not know who I am”, “I’m looking for myself”, “I’m trying to understand who am I”) while a destructive crisis is accompanied by closeness and negative emotional states, especially when social-role statements dominate. A typical example of this type: the last statement of one respondent's answers after a dozen professional roles (“I am a manager”, “I’m an administrator”, etc.) was “I am an unhappy woman”.

6) The presence of words indicating ‘identity work’ (characteristics of beliefs, goals, values) usually imply the presence of a strong open identity.

All of these indicators are analyzed in the aggregate, and only after a deep qualitative and quantitative analysis is it possible to form conclusions about the prevalence of a particular identity status (Table 1).

Table 1: Indicators of Identity Statuses

Identity Status	Indicators
1. Strong open identity	High differentiation; predominance of personality characteristics, prevalence of positive characteristics, indicators of “identity work” , perspective identity indicators.
2. Strong closed identity	High or medium level of differentiation, the prevalence of social-role statements, the prevalence of positive self-characterization.
3. Weak open identity (constructive crisis)	High or very high differentiation, the prevalence of personal characteristics, the presence of crisis indicators or indicators of "identity work", the presence of perspective identity.
4. Weak closed identity (destructive crisis)	Low differentiation, the prevalence of social -role statements and negative self-characterization, the presence of the words "crisis indicators".

The second method, ‘Significant problems and solutions’, was elaborated by Antonova (1997) on the basis of the methodology used in the thesis of Bosma (1985). This method to study was utilized for the processes of self-determination.

This method includes open-ended questions aimed at exploring the following measurements of the self-determination process: a) the existence and content of the actual spheres of identity formation units, shown by significant problems (“What are the three problems you are now concerned about?”), b) the existence and nature of activity in terms of resolving these problems (“What are you doing to resolve these problems?”).

The methodology is based on Marcia’s assumptions that the processes of self-determination starts when the person begins resolving the actual problems in a particular area of life. The respondents' answers were analyzed using content analysis. We counted the statements in two categories: a) sphere of problem (family, business, money, health, well-being); b) kind of activity to resolve the problem (passive – active behavior). The method ‘Significant problems and solutions’ allows to indicate the leading spheres of identity formation, and the presence of problem resolution activity as an indicator of the self-determination processes. The significance of differences was established using the Mann-Whitney coefficient.

Results and Discussion

The results of the answers to the question “Who am I?” show that there are significant differences in the features of self-determination and identity between female and male managers. They are as follows:

1) The proportion of social and personal identity components in the total identity structure of men and women differs (Table 2). The social identity component dominates in the structure

of males, whereas the personal identity prevails among women. Professional identification is much less pronounced among women than among men. Women used more indicators of crisis in their self-descriptions, especially the indicators of search (such as ‘I’m looking for myself’, ‘I’m trying to understand who I am’).

Table 2: Gender-specific identity features (in % of the total number of statements for each sample; Professional Identity and Crisis Identity are a subset of Social Identify and Personal Identity).

Identity Component	Social Identity (SI)	Personal Identity (PI)	Professional Identity (PrI)	Crisis Indicators (CI)
males	62*	37*	20*	6*
females	42*	55*	9*	10*

* (p<0.05)

2) The identity status indicates the presence or absence of an identity crisis, as well as readiness to changes. We found the following differences in the identity statuses of men and women (Table 3). The closed strong identity is more common for men, and the open strong identity is more often among women. In general, men are more closed and are not likely to change. At the same time, these results may reflect the fact that men tend to displace problems and to demonstrate a socially desirable image of a stable and successful person. Women are more open to change, while at the same time, their identity is less stable, and they are more prone to structural crises of identity (status ‘open unstable identity’).

Table 3: Identity status: gender differences (in % of the total number of people in each sample).

Identity Status	Open Strong	Closed Strong	Open Weak	Closed Weak
males	14*	72*	7*	7
females	34*	30*	30*	6

* (p <0.05)

3) As for affective component of identity, negative and ambivalent self-relation is more typical for women, although these differences were not statistically significant in our sample. The analysis of problems and solutions identifies the significant areas in which identity formation is going on, and the availability of decision-making processes, which are indicators of the self-determination process (Table 4).

Table 4: Problems and their solutions: gender differences (in % of the total number of statements by groups).

Types of problems	Professional problems	Personal problems		Societal problems
		Financial problems	Family and personal problems	
males	37	2*	39	22*
females	35	27*	39	0*

* ($p < 0.05$)

Women are much more concerned about financial problems than men (lack of money, renovating apartment, buying a new car or apartment, etc.). For men, however, this kind of problem is almost non-existent, or they do not perceive it as a problem (in the questionnaire, we used the word ‘problem’), but as everyday tasks that require solutions. At the same time men, unlike women, are concerned about the problems of society and the country (the political situation in the country, the environment, the degradation of society, the future of Russia, etc.); they use definitions like ‘citizen of Russia’ more often than women. Perhaps a strong civil identity is more typical for men than for women. However, the emphasis on the problems of society (usually listed issues actively discussed in the media) can be a way of escaping self-disclosure.

In general, the personal sphere (including financial problems) is more important for women than the professional sphere. But personal problems for women primarily concern others, meaning problems in relationships and family as well as health, while men are more concerned about their own personal problems (time-management; lack of self-confidence, lack of personal self-development). Decision-making processes are more active among women, while among men the proportion of respondents giving passive answers (“do nothing”, “I can’t do anything about it”) is higher than among women.

We can conclude that the self-determination process is more difficult for female managers than for males in Russia. Perhaps it is caused by the contradictions between social demands for female managers. On the one hand, they should be more masculine and active as they work in business; while on the other hand, they should be good mothers and wives, and that implies more feminine behavior. That contradiction may launch a more active process of self-determination. The open identity status that most women have is apparently caused by the same circumstances. Openness of identity means readiness for changes which are necessary for the best adaptation to the social situation. Very surprising for us was the result that women are much more concerned about financial problems than men. Maybe it is due to the specific Russian situation where women play the leading position in the family, and often manage the family budget.

Limitations of the research study can be connected with cross-cultural factors. For example, differences between men and women in identity statuses and problems can be determined by cultural attitudes and stereotypes to family, work, and profession, which are specific for Russia in this study. Due to the small sample, we couldn’t follow the influence of professional status, age, work experience and other demographic factors. Another limitation concerns empirical methods, which cannot cover all aspects of the self-determination process. That is why, the results are more useful for understanding personal and life self-

determination, but for analyzing professional self-determination, additional methods should be used.

Conclusion

According to the Tajfel and Turner approach (Tajfel & Turner, 1986), every personality can be defined on different levels of self-categorization: social, organizational, national, local etc. We can see that male and female managers have different foci of self-categorizations and it's important for understanding the self-determination process as well. We can conclude that the processes of self-determination proceed more precisely among women working in business. Women are more prone to change, looking for themselves and for possible solutions to problems, and their leading spheres of the formation of new identity elements are family, personal relationships, and material status. It can be assumed that the material welfare of the family is the main stimulus of self-determination for women in business. For men, however, the self-development as a specialist and as an individual is more significant. We suppose that men are developing business for the sake of self-development and to achieve status in society, rather than for the welfare of the family.

In conclusion, the hypotheses were confirmed:

1. There are gender differences in the identity features of people working in business: a) the personal component predominates in the identity structure of women, whereas in the identity structure of males, the social component prevails; b) men have a stronger professional identity than women; c) the presence of crisis indicators is more frequent for women than for men.
2. There are gender differences in the identity status: the closed strong identity is more typical for men, and the open strong identity is more common for women. In general, the degree of openness to changes is higher among women than in men. Men have a higher degree of stability of identity. This suggests that men working in business are less likely to change anything in their life.
3. The process of self-determination related to making decisions about themselves and their lives is more active among women. For women, the main stimulus of self-determination in business is their family's welfare, and for men the main stimulus is self-development and achievement of status in society.

The results can be used in coaching and therapy. We can assume that when working with men, the coach should pay more attention to the development of openness to change while maintaining stability of identity, whereas for women it is more important to stimulate forming units of professional identity, overcoming crises of identity, and to create and maintain a balance between the personal and professional spheres of life.

Implications for Future Research

This research was conducted in a single geographic location. In order to generalize the findings, further studies are required in different locations and countries with wider samples. Other factors – including, for example, age, professional status family status and others – which can influence identity and self-determination features could also be considered if the sample size were to be increased.

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