

## Can Expression and Formation of Adolescent National Identity be Predetermined by the Gender?

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### Abstract

*The article aims to identify whether the expression of senior adolescents' national identity at the cognitive, emotional and connotative levels as well as its formation are dependent on the gender. Seeking to reveal the possible influence of gender on the national identity, the significance of the contemporary social gender theory, when the gender depends on the subjective choice of an individual, as well as the relevance of theories that do not question biological, psychological and social gender differences, are highlighted. The data obtained during the conducted research allow stating that the expression of the national identity of adolescents differs between the genders at the cognitive, emotional and connotative levels, and the factors that contribute to building up of the national identity to a large extent do not differ from one gender to the other.*

**Keywords:** National identity, adolescents, gender differences, gender uniformity, cognitive, emotional and connotative levels.

### Introduction

#### Gender in the Context of Adolescents National Identity

Following the principles of social engineering, in the post-modern society attempts are made to construct the surrounding world following the priorities set up by the society or even to change everything according to the human will. The gender issues are no exception: when under the influence of contemporary social gender theories, the emphasis is laid on the attitude that being a representative of certain social gender does not necessarily always mean living according to the normative understanding of femininity and masculinity. In this case, a social gender is dependent on specific social practices, when it is not understood as a complete structure of sets of roles but rather as a structure, the borders of which are established in the process of social interaction and institutionalization each time (Kraniauskienė, 2005). In accordance with that approach, it is stated that a social gender is a constantly changing phenomenon that depends on the subjective choice of an individual himself or herself. However, another approach is also available in the research world, when biological, psychological and social sex differences are not denied. A social gender is defined as roles of father, mother, wife, husband and others and the fact that the categories of social gender are constructed following the biologically determined dichotomous gender order is doubted (Kraniauskienė, 2005). Following the normative theory of social roles, a close relationship with the biological gender is envisaged and it is emphasised that there exist finite sets of gender roles and expectations that are structured on the basis of biological gender (Kraniauskienė, 2005). This theory states that all the roles rest on the clear structure of male/female order. The data of scientific research focusing on identifying gender differences from various aspects are significant for elaboration on this theory. The indicated gender distinctions are linked to personal features and communication (Giudice, 2001); gender differences have been analysed from the perspective of education and higher indicators in women education and domination in the field of education have been identified (Pekkarinen, 2012); different speaking styles have been identified between women and men (Galinskaitė, 2011). For example, Bussey (2011) emphasises considerable differences related to

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a socio-economic status, ethnicity and educational background. Numerous research studies state that the differences between male and female brain structure and function also have huge implications for educational theories (Zaidi, 2010). These differences are grounded on neuroscientific research, when brain investigation is inseparable from research on the hippocampus, which is considered to be a major component of brain that is responsible for learning, memory and emotion. The hippocampus predetermines gender differences and spatial abilities (Buzsáki, Moser, 2013). This means that on the average better verbal skills and faster perception are characteristic of women, whereas spatial abilities are better developed among men (Choleris, Galea, Sohrabji, Frick, 2018; Yagi, Galea, 2019). Human brain consists of the cerebral mantle with a 2-4 mm layer of grey matter and of main white matter. Female brain employs white matter ten times as often as men, whereas the latter use their grey matter 7 times as frequent as women do. This indicated difference in the system of information processing in brains provides the explanation, why girls tend to change assignments faster than boys. Due to the differences in grey matter, it is possible to explain why adult women are good at multi-tasking and why adult men can better concentrate on the projects, which require particular attention (Uddin, 2019).

Analysing the issues related to the identity and gender, Erikson(1993, 1994) already mentioned gender-specific differences in building up an identity. Research on the national identity, as an expression of identification with own nation while ensuring continuity of national community, establishing the meaning of the self in own nation, conveying the features of mother tongue, national history and culture, are of significance seeking to identify the role of gender in identifying with a specific nation. While studying gender issues, Butler (1990) emphasised that the gender identity does not exist separately from gender expression. The identity consists of gender expression itself, which, in its turn, is a result of identity. Following this idea, it can be stated that analysis of gender expression allows disclosing the present and absent gender differences.

Thus, the following **problem-based** question is raised in this article analysing the gender-specific identification with own nation: what is the role of gender revealing the expression and formation of adolescent national identity?

**The goal of the article** is to disclose gender-specific expression and formation of adolescent national identity.

### **The Research Methodology: Empirical Findings Related to Gender Dimension of Adolescents' National Identity Expression**

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, 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 (in this case - gender) revealing the importance of gender as the factor to formation of adolescents' national identity. The data were also processed applying Pearson  $\chi^2$  Chi square criterion.

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) (Creswell, 2014). 10 clusters (districts of Lithuania) were distinguished, which comprised 16 general education schools of Lithuania (10 city schools and 6 rural schools).

**The empirical part.**

In order to answer the question in what ways national identity is expressed depending on gender, the Student’s t-test was used, which confirmed the importance of gender for the expression and formation of national identity.

**Table 2. The Expression of Adolescents’ National Identity According to Gender**

Factors	Student’s t-test			
	Gender			
	Mean value		Mean difference	p – level
	Girls	Boys		
National activity	1.9124	2.0016	-0. 89233	0.006
Knowledge about the culture of the nation	1.7331	2.1061	-0.37310	0.000
Cultural and historical memory	1.7302	1.8100	-0.07975	0.011
Use of the native tongue	1.3504	1.4780	-0.12758	0.000
Religiosity	2.0422	2.1365	-0.09431	0.016
National loyalty	1.3332	1.4363	-0.10315	0.000
Sport	1.5389	1.3616	-0.17729	0.000
Openness to the world	1.5300	1.9065	-. 037648	0.000

- the difference is statistically significant, when  $p < 0.05$ .
- the mean value is closer to one. Note. The lower the mean value (closer to one), the more favourable evaluation it got, which shows the stronger national identity.

The table 2 shows that there is a statistically significant difference between gender and the singled out factors that make up the national identity. It turned out that the girls’ national identity was stronger, because for many factors their mean values were lower than boys’. Thus, girls had better knowledge about the culture of the nation because the statistically significant difference ( $p = 0.000$ ) was established, and the mean differences between girls and boys were highest (-0.3710).

The knowledge about the culture of the nation was further elaborated by the application of the Pearson’s chi-squared test. For example, totally statistically significant difference was observed in the evaluation of the knowledge about ethnic culture: ethnographic regions of Lithuania ( $\chi^2 = 15.796$ ,  $p < 0.0001$ ), for which 70.5 per cent of girls got good evaluation and 56.7 per cent of boys. There was obtained totally statistically significant difference between gender and knowledge about historical personalities: Lithuanian dukes ( $\chi^2 = 35.139$ ,  $p < 0.0001$ ) and folklore ( $\chi^2 = 50.547$ ,  $p < 0.0001$ ).

Girls were also more likely to be involved in national activities ( $p = 0.006$ ). The application of the Pearson chi squared test allowed to determine that girls (32.9 per cent) more frequently contributed to the fostering of ethnic culture (through the participation in national events) at school than boys (20.9 per cent) ( $\chi^2 = 31.054$ ,  $p < 0.0001$ ). Also, girls (30.1 per cent) were more likely to attend performances of Lithuanian artists (composers, actors, singers, etc.) ( $\chi^2 = 20.134$ ,  $p < 0.0001$ ). Girls (82.0 per cent) were more likely than boys (66.7 per cent) to attend traditional celebrations ( $\chi^2 = 28.193$ ,  $p < 0.0001$ ).

Student’s t-test highlighted that girls also had a stronger relationship with the cultural and historical memory of the nation. It was further confirmed by the Pearson’s chi-squared test when statistically significant differences were found between gender and the sensations evoked by folklore, because girls (40.6 per cent) indicated that they were more likely to derive pleasurable experience than boys (22.2 per cent) ( $\chi^2 = 33.457$ ,  $p < 0.0001$ ). The same applied to the pleasurable experience derived from prominent personalities (singers, artists, etc.) ( $\chi^2 = 45.797$ ,  $p < 0.0001$ ).

Other factors became evident as well, i.e. the use of the native tongue ( $P = 0.000$ ), religiosity ( $p = 0.016$ ), national loyalty ( $p = 0.000$ ), openness to the world ( $p = 0.000$ ), which were better expressed in girls than in boys.

However, the 'Sport' factor was more typical of boys, because a statistically significant difference ( $p = 0.000$ ) was found and the mean value was closer to one for boys. Pearson's chi square test revealed that the experience of observing or taking part in sports competitions was also statistically significant with respect to gender, but this time boys (73.2%) indicated that they were more likely to derive a highly pleasurable experience than girls (58.8% ( $X^2 = 17,710$ ,  $p < 0.0001$ )). Also, a higher percentage (66.2 per cent) of boys than girls (55.7 percent) were more likely to watch sports competitions of Lithuanian teams ( $\chi^2 = 10.192$ ,  $p < 0.006$ ).

One more research question was raised – what has the most significant influence on the formation of national identity, depending on gender?

For this purpose regression analysis was applied. For the analysis of the female regression model the value of the determination coefficient  $R^2$  (R Square) was 0.489 and the adjusted R Square was 0.481, while for the male regression model the  $R^2$  value was 0.444 and  $R = 0.433$ . Thus, the coefficient of determination  $R^2$  was greater than 0.25, so the regression analysis regarding gender was justified. In the female regression model, the Durbin-Watson criterion (d) was equal to 1.978 and in the male – 1.925, which are considered appropriate because they are close to 2. Also, the ANOVA p value in both cases was 0.000, which indicated that the models were statistically significant.

In analyzing what other factors had the greatest influence on the national loyalty of girls, in particular, the regression equation should be written down:

*National loyalty = -0.068 + 0.176 \* National activity + 0.035 \* Knowledge about culture of the nation + 0.273 \* Cultural and historical memory + 0.164 \* Use of the native tongue + 0.093 \* Religiosity + 0.050 \* Sport + 0.027 \* Openness to the world.*

The regression model of boys could be visualized using the following formula: *National loyalty = 0.036 + 0.382 \* National activity + 0.088 \* Knowledge about culture of the nation + 0.117 \* Cultural and historical memory + 0.173 \* Use of the native tongue + 0.005 \* Religiosity + 0.089 \* Sport + -0.080 \* Openness to the world.*

**Table 3.** Regression Analysis of the most significant influence on the formation of national identity depending on gender

Coefficients						
Gender	Model	Non-standardized coefficients		Standardized coefficients	t	P value
		B	Standard error	Beta		
Girl	Predicted variable	-.068	,078		-,866	,387
	National activity	,176	,041	,212	4,328	,000
	Knowledge about culture of the nation	,035	,027	,047	1,296	,196
	Cultural, historical memory	,273	,043	,316	6,410	,000
	Use of the native tongue	,164	,042	,159	3,931	,000
	Religiosity	,093	,027	,139	3,497	,001
	Sport	,050	,024	,076	2,046	,041
	Openness to the world	,027	,029	,035	,921	,357
Boy	Predicted variable	,036	,100		,359	,720
	National activity	,382	,046	,435	8,319	,000
	Knowledge about culture of the	,088	,031	,119	2,845	,005

nation						
Cultural, historical memory	,117	,048	,132	2,456	,015	
Use of the native tongue	,173	,044	,180	3,921	,000	
Religiosity	,005	,035	,007	,143	,886	
Sport	,089	,035	,107	2,516	,012	
Openess to the world	-,080	,031	-,109	-2,532	,012	

 - the most influential factor.  
 - the least influential factor.

Thus, the regression analysis suggests that the national loyalty of girls was mostly influenced by the connection with the cultural, historical memory, national activity and the use of the native language. The least influential were openness to the world and knowledge of the national culture.

The research data showed that national activity of boys was the most important for their national loyalty. There should also be mentioned the use of the native tongue and the connection with cultural and historical memory. The weakest influence was exerted by religiosity and openness to the world, which showed a negative connection, which means that the stronger expression of national loyalty and commitment to the nation denoted the weaker openness to the world (the reverse interpretation is also possible). It is obvious that the same most influential factors dominate for both genders, but in the case of boys, national activities were highly important.

It should be emphasized that knowledge about the culture of the nation in both cases was of little significance, having only weak influence on national loyalty.

### Discussion

The obtained research data allowed establishing a different gender-specific expression of national identity. The expression of national identity among girls is stronger in terms of many parameters (at cognitive, emotional and connotative levels), except for sport-related experiences and sports activity. The data on the latter parameters reveal male domination, when sports activity is seen as a means of expressing national identity among boys.

However, the same factors predetermine building up of national identity regardless of gender. It is obvious that the national identity of both adolescent girls and boys is mostly preconditioned by national loyalty, national activity, knowledge of national culture, the past of the nation and Lithuanian surrounding. However, the conducted regression analysis highlighted a number of differences. For example, the national identity of adolescent girls is strongest influenced by the link with the nation’s past, then by the national activities and national surrounding, whereas openness to the world and knowledge of the national culture have the weakest impact. The national loyalty of adolescent boys is mainly affected by national activity, the national surrounding and the link with the nation’s past. The weakest correlation is observed with religiousness and openness to the world, which shows a negative relationship: the stronger the national loyalty and commitment, the weaker the openness to the world. It is an obvious fact that the same most influential factors prevail among representatives of both genders: only in the case of boys the influence of national activities is much stronger expressed, whereas among the girls the strong link with the nation’s past prevails. It should be mentioned that knowledge of national culture has little significance to adolescents’ national loyalty.

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