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Identity of Czech Adolescents – Relation of Cyberspace and Reality

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Research goals

In general:

To show and study connections between Czech adolescents' real and virtual identity.

Hypotheses:

- Adolescents in the status moratorium use the Internet more often as the resource for the self-exploring and the clarification of their attitudes and values.
- Adolescents in the status moratorium experiment on the Internet more often with their identity (they impersonate more often as another person etc.)
- Adolescents in the status moratorium break more often the norms and rules which are well-known from their real life.
- Adolescents in the status foreclosure identity behave on the Internet less often than in reality in accordance with their parents' opinions and values.

Role of virtual identity in the context of Marcia's theory

Crisis - process of choice and decision-making, active searching and exploring

Commitment – accepting certain goals, life styles (etc.) – taking responsibility for life

Current position	Identity Foreclosure	Diffusion	Moratorium	Identity Achievement
Crisis	Missing	Missing	Present	Present
Commitment	Present	Missing	Missing or vague	Present
Characteristic	Take over the opinion from authorities, rigidity, dependence	Easily suggestible, norm's influence, influence of a group	New roles, new values , identity experimenting	Self-reflection flexibility, independence
Internet influence	Absence of commitment, creating one's own opinion, freeing of authorities' influence	Absence of group sanctions, lack of respect to norms, better self-assessment	“Safe” identity experimenting, opinions and attitudes verification	MAMA cycle

Research sample

- 681 high-school students aged 12 - 20 were involved
- 492 “pen-and-paper” questionnaires (3 high schools)
- 189 Internet questionnaires

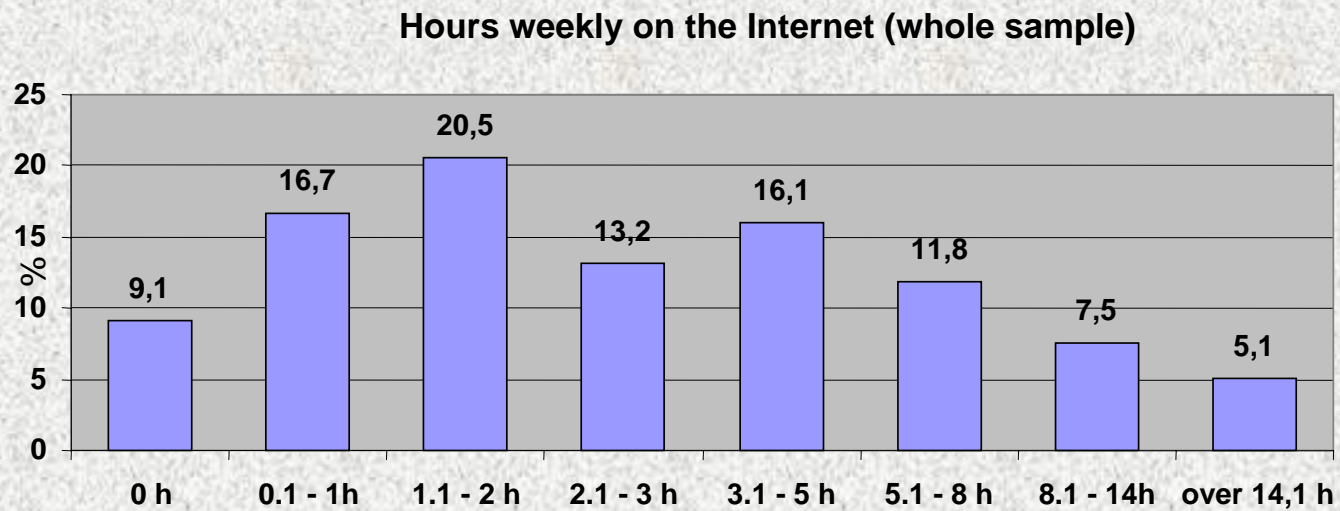
Questionnaires		Man	Woman	Total
Reality	N	199	293	492
	%	40,4	59,6	100
Internet	N	79	110	189
	%	41,8	58,2	100
Total	N	278	403	681
	%	40,8	59,2	100

Method

- questionnaire survey
- two forms of the questionnaire – pen-and-paper + web
- own questionnaire :
 - 24 items on adolescents' identity
 - 7 items on basic demographic characteristics
 - 64 items surveying ways of adolescents' behavior in the virtual world
- pilot study - PROTOTYPE OEMIS and OEMIS-2 (Adams, 1986)
- comparison of the data collected on the Internet and in the reality

Czech adolescents on the Internet

(time spent on the Internet weekly in hours)



Marcia's Identity Statuses - questionnaire

24 items asking for adolescent's identity in 3 areas
(PROTOTYPE OEMIS a OEMIS-2) :

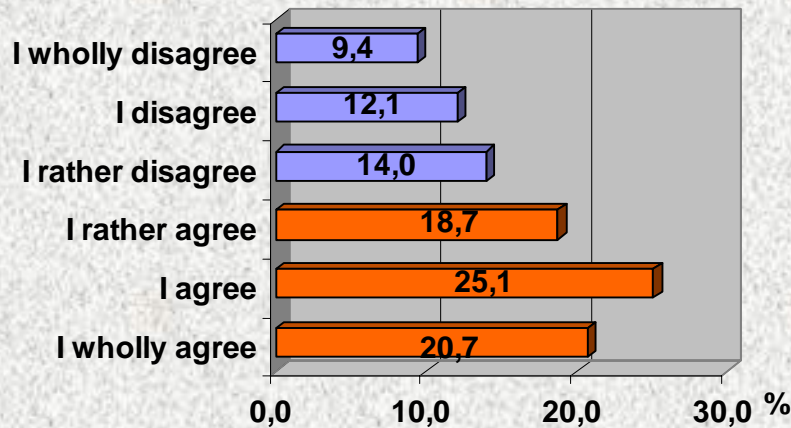
- life style
- partner relationships
- friend relationships

Reliability analysis of identity statuses items

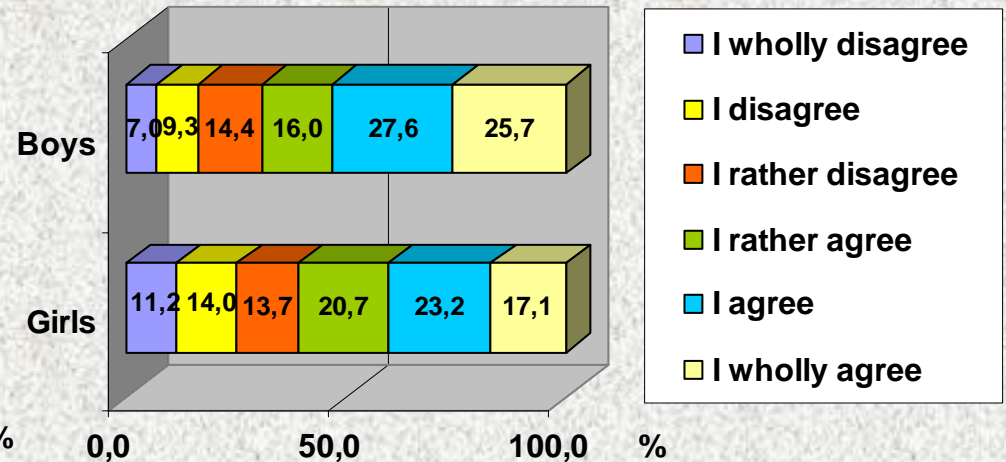
Status	Cronbachovo Alpha
Diffusion	0.51
Identity Foreclosure	0.77
Moratorium	0.71
Identity Achievement	0.66

Examples from the questionnaire

My parents very rarely know what I do on the internet.



My parents very rarely know what I do on the internet / gender



$[\chi^2 (5, N = 614) = 13.84, p = .017]$

Marcia's Identity Statuses

in the context of time spent on the Internet

Pearson correlations of statuses and ways of using the Internet

Scores of identity statuses	Hrs. Internet	Hrs. email	Hrs. web	Hrs. chat	Hrs. progr.	Hrs. games	Hrs. school
Diffusion	0.01	-0.03	0.02	-0.06	0.01	** 0.09	0.02
Identity Foreclosure	** -0.09	-0.01	** - 0.09	* -0.12	0.05	-0.04	0.04
Moratorium	-0.04	-0.04	-0.02	0.01	0.02	0.02	0.06
Identity Achievement	0.01	0.08	0.00	0.07	-0.05	0.01	** 0.10

* correlation is significant at the level $p < 0.01$

** correlation is significant at the level $p < 0.05$

Factor analysis

4 dimensions (interpretation):

- (1) High level of the disinhibited behaviour, denial of “parents' norms”

(„Unlike in normal life, I don't have to follow any rules that I don't agree with on the Internet.”)

- (2) Dimension representing transfer of experience from virtual to real life, values and attitudes verification

(„The internet helps me to find out what kinds of friends I want to have.”)

- (3) Experimenting literally with identity (pretending to be someone else, changing gender)

(„Sometimes I present myself as a member of the opposite sex on the Internet.”)

- (4) Adolescent considers himself to be the same in the real and virtual world, he makes no difference between the two worlds.

(„I am the same on the internet as in normal life.”)

Connections between presented factors and identity statuses

Pearson correlations between factors of virtual identity, basic characteristics and identity statuses

	Age	Hrs on the Internet	Hrs in chat rooms	Diffusion	Identity Fore-closure	Moratorium	Identity Achievement
Factor1 (disinhibited behaviour)	-0.03	0.06	* 0.11	0.05	* -0.15	* 0.15	0.08
Factor2 (testing of values + attitudes)	-0.05	0.08	* 0.16	0.04	* 0.15	* 0.30	* 0.16
Factor3 (experiments with identity)	-0.05	0.05	0.09	-0.01	-0.06	* 0.12	-0.05
Factor4 (the same in real and virtual life)	0.05	-0.05	0.03	-0.10	-0.03	* -0.11	* 0.14

* correlation is significant at the level $p < 0.01$

Rejection score of parents' norms

Summary of 4 items (Cronbach Alpha = 0,66) :

- C14: „My parents very rarely know what I do on the Internet..“
- C15: „If my parents knew the sort of people I make friends with on the Internet, they would not agree with it..“
- C16: „I am a different person on the Internet than at home, such that my parents probably wouldn't recognise me.“
- C17: „My potential partner on the Internet is a person whom my parents would not like.“

Correlations of rejection score of parent's norms items, basic characteristics and identity statuses

	C14	C15	C16	C17	Rejection score of parents norms
Age	-0.04	* -0.10	** -0.13	-0.02	* -0.10
Hours weekly on the Internet	* 0.08	0.07	** 0.17	-0.02	* 0.12
Hours weekly in chat rooms	** 0.11	** 0.14	** 0.20	0.01	** 0.17
Diffusion	0.01	0.03	* 0.08	-0.02	0.04
Identity Foreclosure	** -0.17	-0.07	** -0.11	-0.07	** -0.16
Moratorium	0.08	** 0.20	** 0.19	** 0.15	** 0.21
Identity Achievement	0.04	0.04	0.02	0.01	0.04

* correlation is significant at the level $p < 0.01$

** correlation is significant at the level $p < 0.05$

Hypotheses verification

Confirmed hypotheses:

- Adolescents in the status moratorium use the Internet more often as the resource for the self-exploring and the clarification of their attitudes and values.
- Adolescents in the status moratorium experiment on the Internet more often with their identity (they impersonate more often as another person etc.)
- Adolescents in the status moratorium break more often the norms and rules which are well-known from their real life.

Rejected hypothesis:

- Adolescents in the status foreclosure identity behave on the Internet less often than in reality in accordance with their parents' opinions and values.

Conclusions

We found connections between real adolescents' identity status and their behaviour in the virtual world.

- Moratorium status seems to be a period when adolescents behave in the virtual world in a more specific way (they experiment more often, verify the values and attitudes, resist to norms etc.)
- Chat rooms are the specific environments which allow adolescents to behave in the disinhibited way and often discuss anonymously with the others their problems, ideas (etc.) and verify their own values and attitudes.
- Adolescents' behaviour on the Internet often corresponds to their real identity (their real behaviour).

The Internet is not the world totally disconnected from the adolescents' real world, rather becoming another location (opportunity or dimension) where the adolescents can satisfy their needs.

**Your child's development looks
very good. Don't you want to
send him an email?**

