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AN IMPACT OF SOCIAL NETWORKS CYBER ETHICS ON THE MODERN IDENTITY FORMATION

Abstract

An ability to instantly transmit and replicate information provides new means of identity construction and their impact on a person's identity in the modern world. One of them is a social network as a form of interactive sociality transferred to virtual space. Social networks place a variety of entertainment content, provide access to information or means of further work with it at the users' disposal, and affect the person's perception of the world and himself. The paper explores some aspects of social networks functioning, which affects the modern person's identity. It is observed that the process of self-assertion as a virtual person is not just a game for fun, but both a potential danger and a new space of creative self-realisation in the information field, which can change significant aspects of the user's identity including ethical ones.

Keywords: virtuality, network hierarchy, game, identification mechanism, security, information society, cyberspace.

Introduction

The present-day world is often called an era of the information society, which is due, primarily, to the intensive development of the Internet as a means of effectively transmitting and replicating information of various content and quality. Thanks to digital media, the information emerging in social and cultural life is instantly spread around and also instantly becomes out of date due to new information. While in the era of print media the inaccessibility of material carriers led to a loss of information itself, in the era of digital media its distribution implies the creation of such a number of coexisting copies that even a decade later the outdated information can be updated.

An increase in the information content causes both the need for adequate qualitative measurement accounting for the diversity of its forms and methods of use and the need to comprehend principles of the new world order. Information becomes not just a real product, but a monetary equivalent as a universal intermediary for obtaining goods and services, and the primary consumption resource. "Consumption is virtual integrity of all things and messages that now constitute a more or less coherent discourse. Consumption, to the extent this word makes

sense at all, is the activity of systematic manipulation of signs" (Baudrrillard, 2001, p. 164).

Unlike print media distribution, digital media distribution has some prominent quantitative characteristics, and these are a variety of digital media types, re-transmission speed, the amount of potential audience, reproduction availability on tangible media. At the same time, the fact that information itself as a retransmitted "data unit", when distributed via the Internet, may not qualitatively differ from that distributed through the print media nevertheless gives rise to the illusion that its impact on society and man remains the same.

However, the first key difference is that not only the information itself becomes significant in the network, but the public reaction to it, which is immediately measured in the number and speed of quotations, secondary remarks and comments. Furthermore, the second one is that an intermediary devoid of anthropological features - a computer capable of storing, accumulating, and transmitting an information volume incompatible with the limited human capabilities also deprives a person of both direct control over the information available on the network, and responsibility for its distribution.

This is a reason why, as Nass and Turkle (2015) point out, even among the users themselves "online life was associated with self-reflection" (p.78). Moreover, "the rise of the Internet and the cybersphere more broadly ushered in a new phase of human civilisation - the Digital Age" (Nass, 2012, p. 91). Today, we are witnessing the transition to a new type of work with information similar to that, which was caused by the invention of printing. However, overcoming another barrier of natural physiological limitations in the field of search and accumulation of information can lead to levelling the develop-

ment and use of these man's abilities. Even now, many people think that developing or maintaining their potential for memorising and holding information in long-term memory is useless as they got used to relying on search engines and external media.

Under the new conditions, the control over the creation and retransmission of information is complicated since information and communication deformers are not separate sites, whose updates are fairly controlled, but a social network where the production and retransmission of information are unlimited in terms of volume and time.

Originally invented as a gaming space and a way of sharing online leisure, social networks are firmly rooted in everyday life of modern society. A person who is not involved in at least one of the social networks does not leave a sufficient virtual mark of his presence, which can be identified and included in certain communication practices.

Furthermore, it is a question of participation in joint activity forms, such as discussions, file sharing, using instant messengers and services that provide access subject to registration and linking the user's profile with his real contacts to a bank account or location at a particular point of time.

Cyberspace and particularly social networks, thanks to the continuous transmission and replication of information, not only offer a variety of identification schemes and models, but also blur over the identity field, which previously could be described as an eclectic unity, which enables to combine previously incompatible elements, strategies, or beliefs in game practices. So the purpose of this study is not only to describe the social network as a phenomenon, but also the entire range of impacts on identity that it

provides.

The issue of the man's place in the context of the virtual world space becomes as relevant as ever and continues the established tradition of exploring human identity. These studies have been carried out since the 80s; it is worth referring to the Turkle book "The Second Self: Computers and Human Spirit" (1984), where not only the emerging cyberspace practices were described, but also the issues on the impact produced by the computer-mediated communication on the individual's behaviour in real life, and changes in his identity were also addressed.

In Russian philosophy and anthropology, the interest in social networks is observed a little later, which is explained by some of Russia's lagging behind the Western countries in the 1990s in terms of Internet accessibility among the entire population, which was overcome in the 2000s with the advent of smartphones, mobile Internet communications and the Wi-Fi and network spread. It should be stressed that in 1996 the founder of the St. Petersburg system-synergetic school for studying culture Professor M. S. Kagan (1996) called the upcoming epoch to be the epoch of creative culture and multidimensional dialogue as "a universal, all-embracing way of existence of culture itself and man in culture," and social networks are nothing else, but this multidimensional dialogue (p. 405).

Twenty years later, in the epoch of smartphones and multidimensional dialogues as polylogs, the same idea was clarified by the professor of the Massachusetts University Sherry Turkle (2015): "one for solitude, two for friendships, and three for society" (p. 10). However, a new way of existence creates new features.

Following up the tradition of domestic (M. S. Kagan) and foreign (J. Baudrillard (2001), S. Zhizhek, S. Turkle) authors who considered the problem of identity formation in the virtual space, present-day researchers recognise it as one of the critical topics in Russian philosophical anthropology (B. M. Markov (2012), V. Ya. Sukhachev, I. K. Romanova, E. A. Sergievskaya). In 2017, the identity problem in the virtual space became the key topic of the international round table talks held by the Philosophical Anthropology department of the Institute of Philosophy of St. Petersburg State University.

Materials and Methods: The comparative method (comparison and analysis of various identity theories, games, and social networks) was used as the primary research method. The analysis of the social networks impact on identity formation through games was based on the phenomenological method as the most feasible for clarifying the meaning of the original phenomena. The hermeneutic method was used to work with textual sources. The research aimed at demonstrating the growing role of social networks as one of the significant impact factors for identity construction of a modern person.

Steps to achieve the goal set are as follows:

1. Describing the unique development characteristic of modern society, and outlining the sociality transition tendency into virtual space;

2. Determining the functioning and construction features of modern identification mechanism;

3. Demonstrating the networks impact on the identity construction by the social network example "VKontakte".

Results: The outcomes obtained in the article is a study describing the social networks impact on the identity and self-identity formation. A brief description of social networks, their development, and national characteristic is given. The role of the game element typical of the social

networks culture is being developed as a factor affecting everyday practices in social networks, and cyberethics as an identity basis in the information space.

Cyberspace: Information Environment and Social Networks

The Internet existed even before it became available to the general public, but it was precisely its distribution that became a factor that in the last quarter of a century qualitatively changes the daily life of all those who have learned to use the opportunities offered to them. The time that a modern person spends in online text communication (texting) can already significantly exceed the time that he devotes to seeing around his friends.

If at the end of the 20th century the Internet was considered primarily as a means of distributing ready-made texts, digitised sounds, or lowest quality images, but now its capabilities for transmitting and storing data are so advanced that displacing outdated communication methods it becomes daily means of communication. New communication opportunities also stimulate international contacts in the field of scientific research creating a technological leap that provided the transition to the Digital Age (Information World).

The created web-based network ensured information availability, but if it were not for structuring, analysing, and an adequate input-output mechanism, it would cease to be useful due to the information glut hampering to find something definite among the infinite similar. However, after a partial solution of this problem by the search engines, such as Google or Yandex, the methods of generating, distributing, and popularising this or that piece of information are still quite chaotic bearing a strong resemblance to the

Middle Ages methods described by U. Eco (1994): "… The Middle Ages were engaged not in systematic savings, but, on the contrary, in accidental destruction and unorganised preservation: essential manuscripts were lost, and other, completely ridiculous, preserved, magnificent poems were not available because of riddles, or prayers written over them, scriptures were corrupted, unknown pieces were inserted, this is the way the Middle Ages wrote their books" (p. 267).

Moreover, nowadays, information is stored or disappears from the network in a similar random way, and the essential is sometimes lost, and the insignificant is preserved for years. This is also applied to the personal data and those digital traces of private individuals who may not even realise that their actions can be restored or monitored.

The growing content available in cyberspace leads to a qualitative degradation of the stored and distributed material. An unlimited number of coexisting full, or partial copies of the same information unit is created, information is deliberately distorted partially, or completely falsified, unverified facts are presented and recorded as authentic, or true. "Constant texts creation in the hypertextual space, in a certain way, albeit unwittingly, equalises the value of any produced text" (Tebyakina, 2017, p. 220), which is equally applied to both scientific research and reports in VKontakte. And users, losing an ability to distinguish information from the information noise, lose the meaning and implications of scientific facts value and a sense of the reality of everyday events. "The destructive role of superficial information leads to contradictory global consequences at all levels of social life, be it economic, social, cultural, or psychological area." (Galimova & Polatayko, 2015, p. 165)

This process is capable of provoking crises in significant spheres of human activity by the mere stuffing deliberately false information. Furthermore, since "security should be considered not only as the state of security, but rather the ability of the individual, society and state to withstand any external and internal destructive influences aimed at impairing their interests based on stable, progressive functioning and development" (Pyzh & Petrov, 2018, p. 16), it can be said that in this new social space such ideas about themselves and the world created and fixed by users can be considered as endangering themselves, their country, and humanity as a whole.

In cyberspace, as a network of sites with the owners legally responsible for them, the search can be regulated both by search engines and legal rules – taken into account by page owners when updating them. While social networks as a social and communication space shared by many participants allow each participant to create, modify and disseminate information messages, the distinction between the dissemination of information and the expression of private opinion, public actions, and private conversations, which would force everyone to realise their responsibility, is not identified.

The most popular social network in Russia VKontakte in many respects similar to the Facebook principles along with the desire for personal popularity and fame promoted interest groups, including the resale of copyrights. In this case, the group cost depends more often on the number of subscribers, and not on the quality or theme of the material represented in it. This leads, on the one hand, to dramatic multiplication of the same information, which is considered to be catching, and, on the other hand, to "joint ownership" of the created content within one or several groups.

The possibility to include in one's own text the fragments created by others with impunity and out of control implies the idea of information as a characteristic property fundamentally lacking both the author and the owner.

So, new technologies create the possibility of joint ownership and free information receipt, thus missing the idea that the connection between the act and responsibility for it in real life should be extended to cyberspace.

Game Aspects in the
Social Networks Genesis

Circulation of meanings and texts in the social network information field is realised via the game mechanism. Game and social networks are brought together by the essential conventional nature of what is going on, that is, an appeal to the imagination as doing some more thinking, ensuring the very possibility of the functioning of both processes. By registering a profile, a new participant agrees to accept the existing conventionality of interaction as a real social environment. Moreover, gradually its importance is recognised in the real world, up to the recognition of the virtual life priority.

S. Turkle points out that network communities were initially built according to the principles and rules developed in the role-based communities. They emphasised the rules of the office role-playing games, typical examples of which are "Dragons and dungeons", which were popular in the late 1970s and early 1980s. In contrast to the field, the office role-playing games were conducted with a strict constraint in space and time. It is based on their inherent rules and traditions in the 90s MUD (Multi-User Domain) - services for conversations and text games arose in cyberspace. "MUD players are at the same time writ-

ers, creators as much as content consumers.

Furthermore, in this, participation in the MUD has much in common with scripting, performing art, street theatre, theatre improvisation, and even comedy dell'arte." (Turkle, 1995, pp. 11-12) Later, the MUD experience in its turn will become the basis for creating rules and traditions of social networks, including both the experience of online life through text communication and the joint creation of imaginary text worlds.

It is on this fundamental co-authorship as a constant process of creating and maintaining the illusion of the reality of what is going on in the common imagination by the participants themselves, the illusions of control and security of the virtual environment are based.

Similar to the game, activity in the social network is not fundamentally pragmatic. The game does not imply any final or material result, and because of this, it turns into an attractive alternative to everyday life. That is, the game can be viewed as an eternal blink that combines being (reality) and non-being (unreality).

Gaming dynamics and eventful saturation allow a person to take root in the structures of his own life, reconcile with the dullness of everyday existence, gain the meaning and symbolic richness of being: it is the gaming pattern that makes it significant for our inner life, and not the team of players, or game outcome.

The social networks were created as entertainment and integrated into the social sphere not for the sake of profit or benefit, but for the users' pleasure. The play-based principle is inseparable from the principle of pleasure. The pleasure of playing the game is not only in experiencing imagination or realising the creative potential but also in feeling the fullness of one's own being, feeling of "life", awareness of one's own abilities and access to constant novelty that opposes eve-

ryday life monotony. Such a feeling of fullness of the existential experience is comparable to the Kantian experience of the sublime sense, which "is, thus, the feeling of displeasure because of inconsistency of imagination in the aesthetic determination of the value determined through the mind, and at the same time the feeling of pleasure because of this very judgment on the disproportion of the greatest sensual capacity with the ideas of reason, for striving for them, nevertheless, serves us as law (of reason); and this refers to our purpose - to consider everything grand in nature as objects of senses, small and humble compared with the ideas of reason, and that, which arouses in us the feeling of this supersensory purpose, corresponds to this law" (Kant, 1995, pp. 185-186).

Thus, in the virtual environment space, a feeling of the communion of private meaning to the general field of virtual being qualitatively different from everyday existence is created. The Thomas theorem, which states that human behaviour does not determine reality, but a person's opinion of reality found its confirmation. Back in 1928, W. A. Thomas and D. Thomas (1928) stated that "If men define the situation as real, they are real in their consequences" (p. 571).

In this sense, gaming mechanisms allow a person to fall out of reality, and thanks to the awareness of the conventional nature of what is going on to get pleasure while remaining safe. A child, like an adult, in the process of the game moves into a completely different reality. In its context, the objects surrounding a player can acquire completely different meanings and one way or another the player recognises the boundaries of his own self. And just as children play a toy, they move into a common communal field of the game losing their owner for a while, likewise in virtual communication in the social net-

work, there is a tacit transfer of information into common ownership. But if in the game, children perfectly understand the conventionality of the total toys possession limited in time by the game itself, after which they must be returned to the owner, then in the social networks, the total possession of texts or data leads to their endless socialisation and loss of responsibility for appropriating someone else's.

Considering the theoretical approaches to the "one's own - somebody else's" duality in contemporary Russian cultural studies, E. A. Kazakova comes to the conclusion that most of them share the conviction that "the absence or the illusory nature of someone else's makes it difficult to identify one's own" (Kazakova, 2014, p. 123). This means that the opposition "one's own" - "someone else's", which is fundamental for building identity, and which many children's games are focused on, is deformed in social networks. It loses its distinct features, because any "somebody else's" in the network becomes common, and is accepted as "one's own" by everyone who uses it. On the other hand, the need to protect "one's own" from such attacks is rarely required. And not even because the creator seldom attaches such significance to his creation as to spend his strength on his defence against assault, but more often because he is not aware of such use.

Public Groups Influence
on Identity

The development of communication means puts the very process of communication in the first place among the factors affecting identity. And first of all, it concerns communication in the social networks, under which there are no restrictions that other types of interaction related to

the real world have to consider.

The social network VKontakte, according to the sociological research conducted by Brand Analytics, is recognised as the most popular social network in Russia and is ahead of Facebook and Twitter. It presents the characteristics of most social networks, involves users of different ages and social status, and various types of interaction are possible: from personal pages to public communities, from posting and viewing video and audio materials that can be shared, to various games that require as many players as possible.

It is the public that, on the one hand, are public thematic pages, and on the other hand, they allow creating collectively owning and using copyrighted materials that acquire the greatest influence on the user's identity. The public can be viewed as subsections in the common social network involving users by a single, commonly recognised and published interest. In contrast to multi-dimensional dialogue (Kagan, 1996) as a "chat" practice, public or "group" in the overwhelming majority of cases is open and shows its content to anyone who wants it. Their influence on identity is realised to a lesser extent than belonging to real cultural or social groups, but not because of the lesser number of public participants. Any interaction in the network implies the possibility of interrupting communication at any time, blocking the interlocutor, removing him from his communication field, or, on the contrary, deleting oneself by deleting one's profile. The absence of real social ties with other members of public, voluntary entry or exit, the emphasis laid on the entertainment and gaming components results in the illusive general insignificance of what is going on.

Since the main evaluation criterion for publics' success is the number of participants, most of them do not limit, but on the contrary, encour-

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age joining the group. However, there are also closed communities (groups) that provide access only after approving participant's application. But they also publish on the community "wall" available to all potential participants the information about the key interest consolidating the group, designed to interest new users so that they would bother to get full access.

Since it is the openness to new participants in cyberspace that is associated with both security and socially approved activities, very rarely closed publics are used not for the sake of protecting information or ensuring users privacy, but for realizing criminal intent.

J. Huizinga (2011) drew attention to the importance of secrets to increase game attractiveness. By transforming sophisticated ways of gaining access to the community into games and tasks system, the criminals emphasise resource attractiveness and are able to effectively influence and manipulate less protected participants of communication processes with impunity. We actually mean children and adolescents who have access to social networks but do not yet have the skills to realise what is going on around.

By creating the distance "we-they", as an invariant of "one's own" - "someone else's", and representing the figure of the Other both in the positive sense (friend, ones's), and in the negative (not a friend, outsider), the publics create a space to develop collective strategies of identity building. The identity built in this way is based not only on acceptance and trust but also on a clear distance between I and the Other, restricting access to the information about oneself and various aspects of personal life. The relationship to the Other formed in this way allows using social network tools to effectively build up a border area of interaction with other users around oneself and one's profile page, as well as to create

different accessibility levels to personal materials, or interpersonal communication. The publicly available materials still remain in common ownership, and everyone can see what other users contribute to this common space. So, due to the general social network information field, the boundaries accessible to everyone expand, and a new experience of conscious rejection or appropriation of individual elements arises.

Another significant feature of the VKontacte network and its related groups is the messaging service that enables the participants to conduct dialogues and polylogues. This service provides not only privacy, long-term storage, and search for specific information by keywords, but also the possibility to quote it while preserving authorship and the time it was created. Such quotations are called "proofs". Proofs are called upon, by the fact of their own existence, to confirm the authenticity of the speaker's words. However, empirical studies confirm that dialogues fragments with third parties are often used as proofs i.e., private messages are transmitted to those social network participants who did not have the authority or ability to independently access the saved conversation.

The absence of any notice of such message forwarding creates a false sense of security on both sides of the virtual communication: the quoted person does not know that the information has ceased to be confidential, and the communicator is confident that the fact of his participation in the disclosure will not be known to the quoted. Even though the disclosure itself proves the violation of cyber ethics, because like the rest of information, it will continue to be stored and can be updated at any time, but those resorting to such actions most often do not even think about it.

Since the identity ethical aspect is responsi-

ble for shaping the individual's moral consciousness, regulates behaviour strategies, and also implies the idea of the social distance to others, we need to talk about the influence of cyber ethics and its violations on identity. Adherence to ethical standards serves as a guarantor of safe coexistence in the social sphere, allows to make socially approved selections, and take full responsibility for the mistakes made. Thus, we mean not only norms of behaviour and social interaction, but also the limits of personal freedom, which, through choice and responsibility for it, allow people to coexist comfortably as a single community. A conscious understanding of Good and Evil, Freedom and Necessity, and many other ethical categories affect a person's identity being realised in specific actions and everyday experience.

Thus, the sharing and adherence to specific publics ethics by their subscribers who are supported and controlled by moderators can both influence the identity ethical component that goes beyond the virtual world limits and manifests itself in every-day outside network practices.

It should be particularly stressed that despite the ever-increasing role of the virtual environment in human life, the complete transfer of sociality to virtual sphere may result not only in loss of connection with reality but also in various types of neuroses caused by the illusion of social unity in the immediate solitude of an individual behind his computer.

Nevertheless, despite some negative aspects, social networks in general and separate virtual communities-publics in particular, more than anything else, fit the role of the determining factor of modern identity formation. Erickson (2006) stresses that "an individual's identity is based on two simultaneous observations: on the

sense of identity with oneself and the continuity of one's own existence in time and space, and on the recognition that one's identity and continuity are recognised by others" (pp.58-59)

Social networks are able to include the individual in the micro-historical context of a particular group where he acquires apart from his own the collective history, which allows him to appropriate the shared or his own "nodal" moments of the common being as a co-existence of a given public or group. They can become significant for community moments when creating common, shared, and perceived as appropriated content (jokes, memorable comments, local memos, etc.). New group members are accustomed to its life by going through a virtual initiation to master such information and become full members of the Internet community able to retransmit its history and internal specifics just as much as getting the right to participate in the overall process of continuous creation of content, ideas, stories, and narratives, in turn, continuing to create common historical space-oriented outward for the present and potential users.

Mechanisms Providing the Duality of "One's Own" - "Someone Else's" and Personal Data

By socializing the shared information, which blurs the boundaries of "one's own" - "somebody else's" in cyberspace, publics create a sense of group ownership for the user, provide support as a Meaningful Other, a place in the group hierarchy, which can be perceived as meaningful for maintaining positive self-assessment in general.

But due to social networks, instead of a pessimistic postmodern idea about the "death" of the author and further anonymisation, with a view to

maintaining more effective socialisation of information, some mechanisms were created to support authorship through crowdfunding and crowdsourcing. Unwilling to pay a set price for purchasing any content, a potential or already accomplished user voluntarily transfers to its creators the amount that they consider affordable. This way the mandatory commodity-money relations become another significant success marker for a person or group with an attention-grabbing resource: news, movies, songs or texts.

Thus, changing the "one's own" - "somebody else's" border does not mean its final destruction, but implies the idea this opposition continues to influence the person's identity formation causing a desire to recognise others and be recognised as belonging to a group. This prevents virtual society transformation into an anonymity space no less than legal, or technical means of user identification.

Another supportive mechanism of the traditional "one's own" – "somebody else's" ratio is the access restriction system. The paid code is provided to the user as a guarantee of receiving a "hyper-topical" resource, or a constant timely update to the current version. Thus, the resource is presented in the network in a paid and up-to-date version at the same time as free, but "outdated," and the users may choose between the new and their own, and the old, but common.

Similar processes can be observed in relation to the spread of personal data, which, although not a commodity, can be disclosed against the will or knowledge of the "owner" that is, the person whose property they are, as they become not just an essential element of private life, but the information that can be monetised.

Social networks, being built to establish and maintain social connections using Internet technologies instead of restricting paid access, establish access restrictions through the registration of the verifiable personal data. It is the personal data that users represent allows the network to identify and offer, and the user to confirm, or deny a particular contact. For the domestic network Odnoklassniki (Schoolmates), as the name implies, such basic information will be class membership in a particular school, for deadline.media, - professional affiliation.

The expansion of the social networks information space, an increase in their number, and the emergence of narrow specialised networks make an individual provide anonymised society with increasing access to personal information. Furthermore, the point is not in consciously filling in various fields when registering in social networks and adjacent spaces (making cards, participating in opinion polls, shopping in online stores, using e-mail and instant messengers), but rather in the work of service functions built into many geolocation applications allowing real-time monitoring, and marking the location of actions taking place (from the placement of photographs into the internal digital code to the recording of bank transactions and services). Such openness is associated with vulnerability to external destructive influences to a greater extent than with a sense of security that could arise from the transparency of everyday behaviour for the third parties.

In response to the loss of sense of security, a new, "reverse" phenomenon is emerging - local sub-networks and asocial network spaces. S. Turkle (1995) considers in detail how network anonymity at the end of the twentieth century was connected by users primarily with the freedom of personal contacts including the possibility of those that were inaccessible to the human in the real world. Now, anonymity is beginning to acquire an increasingly pronounced value as

an element of personal security: informational, financial, physical. Thus, there is a conscious need to protect information considered as personal up to its complete concealment from being used by those whom the owner consciously did not give access to it.

The Internet is becoming not just an information environment, but the space of social co-existence with its specific threats that can affect the user's real life, and, therefore, requires both knowledge and skills of self-defense. Moreover, since there is no way to give up the use of technology in modern life, anonymity (including imaginary) becomes one of the means to achieve personal security.

The determining factor for the human self now becomes not so much the public virtual space of the accessible social environment (it is just the field for games, manipulations and provocations), but a secret refuge in the Internet segment hidden from the real social connections. It is there that full self-presentation and essential communication with the Other is possible. Communication turns into a fascinating game "recognise me if you can" when in searching for the Other, not the existing social connection is used, but the maximum common interests including the marginal ones (teenage communities, role-playing), or socially denounced (gambling, specific sexual practices, etc.). However, in order to build effective communication in this way, the participants need not only find themselves in the same information segment but also have the access to a common key to become mutually recognised: "login-password".

The freedom of self-presentation to the world avoiding divulging personal information is also possible through imaginary anonymity, when instead of creating and distributing one's own content, he or she turns to people most often not related to the user to approve, or distribute the content. Such are the principles of using "likes" not as a marker of being acquainted with the material, but just as a confirmation of his consent, or "repost" of what could compromise the distributor and damage his personal, or professional reputation. The duality of such actions creates the illusion of non-participation and therefore is perceived as a kind of deliverance from any type of responsibility.

Public personalities (actors, politicians, etc.), whose stay in social networks becomes the part of their image (often served by specialists), due to heightened public interest do not have imaginary anonymity. There is a different approach in this case: a timely statement expected by the observers replaces a real action or feeling. Or, as Guy Debord (2000) points out, "everything that was previously experienced directly is now at arm's length idea." (p. 23)

Network Hierarchy and the Features of the Network Identity Formation

The virtual status of a real or invented personality becomes as substantial and real as the documented social status in everyday reality. And if the virtual status turns out to be higher than real, it can be considered by the user as having priority over the real, and therefore subjective and valued higher. "At the same time, to establish communication with the group, the latter should be presented to the subject as attractive, enhancing his status in society, or at least ensuring a high position in the intragroup hierarchy, which is able to compensate for an insufficiently high position in the society" (Predovskaya, 2016, p. 99).

Therefore, a girl becoming a network resource or group administrator in the social net-

work will consider her opinion within the hierarchy created for her more significant than the opinion of any other participant, no matter how much her real achievements would exceed her own progress. Her self-esteem will be based precisely on cyberspace where she has more influence and power, and it is this sphere that will be experienced as requiring prior attention, care, preservation, and maintenance.

The ability to create multiple personalities as the same user's pseudo-real network accounts introduces an element of the game as a method, by which anonymity in cyberspace and in social networks begins to affect identity giving a player the opportunity to manifest and develop those aspects of personality that would not be realised, or could not be claimed by others. Identity in cyberspace begins to act as an ontological structure, and not just as a social and existential construct. It embodies the world interaction and comprehension model dialectically combining two opposite phenomena - identity and difference. According to J. Deleuze (1998): "There are two different ways to read the world. One calls to think of the difference in terms of preliminary similarity or identity, while the other - to think of similarity, or even identity as a product of deep incommensurability and inconsistency" (p. 234).

The individual's own identity, the self-identity he associates himself with, and what he presents as an evidence of his own existence includes many factors. Self-identification by means of virtual structures is added to the outstanding public service and personal achievements both spiritual and material through social networking accounts, subscriptions to various YouTube channels, services, public websites, file sharing, photo and video hosting. Having no such virtual markers excludes this individual from the wide virtual field of identification and self-identifi-

cation. A person who is absent in social networks is cut off from the significant part of the social space that has moved into the virtual world. It is the possibility to create a post or comment, audio or video recording, photos, or statements confirms the fact that he continues to live.

Cyberspace is supposed to have more room for creativity and imagination presenting art not as a frozen form, but as a living, here and now on-going continuous virtual performance on the creation of test, audio or video material.

Modern identity also includes such forms, which are connected not with a single fundamental basis, but with temporary cultural phenomena - only random events unexpectedly acquiring great popularity in the Webspace. On the one hand, the user himself who turned out to be such a temporary hero as a Brazilian blogger and fan Tomer Savoy during the 2018 World Cup can be widely known for a short time. On the other hand, those who helped bring the news to the top feel the involvement of both the most virtual event, and the consequences of attention to it. This principle is a basis for such a well-known online platform for civic engagement as change.org.

If the modern society is considered as a binary one- i.e., it has both real and virtual dimensions, then we can realise that not national, religious, or cultural characteristics, but the communication process itself becomes the primary basis for identity formation. But it should be conditioned by the non-stop communication practices. Thus, the continuous creation, consumption, and perception of information, interaction, and work with it not only creates social networks communication but also becomes an integral part of a social being.

This discourse has its specific features. One of them is stylistic eclecticism, a mixture of

written speech stylistics with its spoken, every-day, and even slang forms resulting in a special practice of this discourse creation, and its correct perception with its numerous means of simulating natural, non-mediated, and personal communication.

If we mean the functioning of identity in the communicative discourse, then, according to V. Yu. Sukhachev (2004), there is a "dissipation of the identity field", and a decrease in tension: "Moreover, for example, a shift to the discursive scenario of analyzing communication clearly shows that an individual's identity is dispersed or fragmented in the discourse structure, and even our existence becomes an effect derived from the work of discursive machines" (p.119).

This dispersion and fragmentation also partially arise as a result of the significant number of diverse information issues embedded daily in the cyberspace. But blurring personal identity sociality, being thrown into the discourse space, begins to form a general formation field for the identification mechanism. It structures the cultural environment, which is capable to create a common communicative context engaging in dialogue, and bringing into play a broad semantic field.

The mobility of semantic boundaries allows to include in the cultural identification field both the maximum number of individuals and the meanings, which these individuals can operate with. Social networks combining various types of information transfer (text, sound, image and video), provide inexhaustible resources for creating meaning forming context, which, in turn, affect the formation of an individual's identity.

Network Hierarchy and Cyberethics Impact on Identity

Despite the wide range of specific content, each public or group "Vkontakte" has a clear internal structure and hierarchy. The network hierarchy is based on three basic levels: Ownership (owner or creator of the resource itself), Orders (those who do not control the resource but create or modify content already created within it), and Consumption (those who mostly consume created by others).

The ownership level is the most stable. The public commercial component, which develops through online advertising may result in selling a resource or giving it to another owner, but significant changes, such as a radical change in the specifics of content delivery, occur rarely and to a limited extent otherwise, interest, trust, or emotional affection of the users conservative part is lost.

The Order level is responsible for the updates dynamics and is maintained by the authorised and empowered moderators. They ensure the majority of the network resources including both websites and publics focused on the sale of goods, or information online, as well as common publics of interest. In the event of large-scale projects requiring work with a significant amount of information, its own internal hierarchy is possible within this group.

The third level - Consumption includes all other members of the information community (public or group), whose main tasks are to spread information and involve new users in order to achieve the maximum possible popularity of the entire resource, because the "large territory, significance, and, consequently, reality acquire

those aspects that regardless of their essence get more users attention" (Predovskaya, 2008, p. 127), and therefore Users are interested to be involved in the most recognisable resource.

The social network users and public subscribers can often not only create or distribute information content, but also devalue without giving it necessary attention by leaving the group, or creating new, alternative ones with a content that is more attractive to most users.

Since the level of public popularity is measured by the number of subscribers registered or interested in it, for the Vkontakte social network this threshold is determined by the presence of at least 10,000 users, to maintain a constant communication process all participants must observe both generally valid ethical norms and internal specific rules emphasising the fact of belonging to a community and reinforcing cultural identification with it.

Findings

The Internet space with its social networks and other means of communication providing a connection through non-language means (images, music, video) creates more influential and diverse in their mechanisms and forms of identification models and schemes that integrate heterogeneous elements of user identities into some synthetic mobile unity.

An individual obtains an opportunity to comfortably exist in the virtual space, but at the same time the attitude to the outside of the network reality also changes significantly. People are increasingly dealing with ethical, aesthetic, and play forms, other cultures, which in previous eras would have been completely inaccessible. Although the subject's contact with them remains indirect now, they begin to influence both

his identity and his ideas about the entire world.

Adaptation to the new conditions is largely associated with ensuring information security, privacy, freedom, and the creative realisation of the individual, as well as participation in virtual power structures for those who do not have similar access to the real ones. And above all, these processes are implemented in constant and daily communication via various social networks.

Thus, identity in the information society is formed by a constant game with meanings, traditions, and paradigms using a flexible identification mechanism that adapts an individual to a constantly changing external situation, and gives an insight into the understanding of how real personal security is achieved in the new environment.

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