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New Generation Subculture Formation on the Crossing of Real and Virtual Space

Kształtowanie się subkultury nowego pokolenia
na styku świata rzeczywistego i wirtualnego

Summary

New generation spends much of their time in a virtual environment. Under digital technology influence a specific subculture of young people, assigned to the new generation, is being formed. This article presents theoretical analysis of developments in young people subculture, which is forming on the merging of real and virtual spaces. The social constructivist approach is used in analysis of research. The paper also presents some findings of empirical qualitative research conducted in 2017. The education experts' survey data analysis shows emerging changes in real subculture and school teenager behavior influenced by virtual environment. These subcultural changes are manifest in the ways they learn, socialize, communicate, interact with information technologies and deal with information. This virtual world is important for new generation, its influence is not always positive and secure. Under its influence they form their own virtual behavior rules, norms and values, which are later transferred into real learning environment. This transference can be destructive, it may interfere with the interpersonal communication, distort the evaluation of real environment. This influences the personal identity formation. In a virtual space individuals can informally form their own identity (even a multiple one), whereas in a real environment the criteria of identity formation are of more formalized character. These processes affect young people subculture developments.

Keywords: new generation, crossing of real and virtual environments, subculture formation

Streszczenie

Nowe pokolenie spędza większość swojego czasu w świecie wirtualnym. Wśród przedstawicieli tego pokolenia, pod wpływem technologii cyfrowej, kształtuje się specyficzna subkultura młodzieżowa. W artykule przedstawiono teoretyczną analizę rozwoju przedmiotowej subkultury powstającej poprzez połączenie przestrzeni rzeczywistej i wirtualnej. W analizie badań zastosowano podejście konstrukttywizmu społecznego. Opracowanie prezentuje również wyniki empirycznych badań jakościowych przeprowadzonych w 2017 roku. Analiza danych uzyskanych z ankiet przeprowadzona przez ekspertów w dziedzinie edukacji przedstawia pojawiające się zmiany w istniejącej subkulturze i zachowaniach nastolatków w wieku szkolnym, na które wpływ wywiera środowisko wirtualne. Zmiany subkulturowe przejawiają się w sposobie, w jaki przedstawiciele tego środowiska nabywają wiedzę, nawiązują kontakty towarzyskie, komunikują się, przyswajają informacje i wchodzą w interakcje z technologiami informacyjnymi. Dla nowego pokolenia wirtualny świat ma duże znaczenie, lecz jego wpływ nie zawsze jest pozytywny i bezpieczny. To właśnie pod jego wpływem młodzież kształtuje swoje własne wirtualne zasady zachowania, normy i wartości, które później zostają przeniesione do prawdziwego środowiska nauki. Przeniesienie jednego świata na drugi może mieć destrukcyjne skutki, zakłócać komunikację interpersonalną, a także zniekształcać ocenę świata rzeczywistego. Nie pozostaje to bez znaczenia dla kształtowania ich własnej tożsamości. Jej kształtowanie w przestrzeni wirtualnej może bowiem odbywać się w sposób nieformalny (takich tożsamości można stworzyć nawet wiele). Natomiast w rzeczywistym środowisku kryteria jej formowania mają bardziej sformalizowany charakter. Powyższe procesy wywierają wpływ na rozwój subkultur młodzieżowych.

Słowa kluczowe: Nowe pokolenie, styk środowiska rzeczywistego i wirtualnego, kształtowanie subkultury

Introduction

At the beginning of the 1990s, an economist and demographer N. Howe and a historian W. Strauss working separately at the analysis of a popular social phenomenon – the conflict of generations – came to similar conclusions. The behavior of people belonging to one generation differs from behavior of those belonging to the other generation. Later on, in 1991 they together wrote a book *Generations: The History of America's Future, 1584 to 2069*. In it, presenting their theory of generations, N. Howe and W. Strauss (1991) state that a generation is defined by common age location in history and a collective peer personality, for the generations that experience similar early-life experiences develop similar world views and life trajectories. They share some common basic attitudes towards family, risk, culture and values, which differ from those of the other generations.

Today this rapidly developing theory has many issues which are the objects of active academic discussions, particularly the typology of generation archetypes

and labels coined to them and to their location in history of other countries, which may not coincide with American ones defined by N. Howe and W. Strauss (1991, 2000). These differences are manifest in the growing number of research studies of a new generation. It has many specific features and many different labels: a new generation, a generation of digital or virtual natives, a generation Z, etc. The term of *digital natives* is often used to describe this new generation born within the period before and/or after Millennium. The main characteristics of this generation, often mentioned, are its closeness and attachment to digital technology and living in the virtual space, which makes great impact on generation Z and leads to changes in its behavior (Cross-Bystrom, 2010).

The leading Internet and technology experts J. Palfrey and U. Gasser (2008), the authors of the book *Born Digital. Understanding the First Generation of Digital Natives*, present a sociological portrait of the new generation. They stress that major aspects of their lives – social interactions, friendships, civic activities, etc. – are mediated by digital technologies. They have never known any other way of life. The authors believe that children who were born into, were raised and educated in the digital world, when they grow up, they may reshape the future of our society, our world, our economy, our politics and our culture according to their world views, perceptions, understanding and their needs.

Their life is closely related with the advance and development of ICT, which in the last decades has been increasing at a rapid rate. In 2011, approximately a quarter of the world's population had access to the Internet and 86 per cent could connect to the world's communication networks through mobile devices (Palfrey, Gasser, Maclay and Beger, 2011). Access to the Internet, to mobile devices and to digital media are also constantly increasing. According to the research study "Teens and Technology 2013" (a representative survey sample of 802 informants in the ages 12–17) conducted by M. Madden, A. Lenhart, M. Duggan, S. Cortesi and U. Gasser (2013), the practices of technology use are rapidly changing with its development. Smartphone adoption among American teens has increased substantially and mobile access to the internet is pervasive. One in four teens are "cell-mostly" Internet users, who say that they mostly go online using their phone and not using some other device such as a desktop or a laptop computer.

Most likely similar tendencies can be observed in many countries in Europe. But the trajectories and digital technology development situations (the level of digital technologies development and access of young people to the Internet, mobile devices and digital media) are not the same in the developed and in developing countries. Therefore, it is not enough to be born within a certain generational period or have a desk or a laptop computer.

In the UNICEF report "The State of the World's Children 2011" there are three divides mentioned which have to be bridged in many countries. The first divide has to do with basic access to technologies, the second one involves the skills necessary to develop in order to be able to use technologies after they become accessible for all world children. The third divide is related to the lack

of knowledge that we have about the new generation (Palfrey, Gasser, Maclay & Beger, 2011, p. 14).

The problem of our research stems from the third divide, our limited understanding of how young people, born digital, use digital media across societies and cultures, how it changes their (sub)culture and their behavior: of how young people navigate the online, digitally mediated world and use it in an offline space for development of social, learning and technical skills necessary for their successful future life.

In 2015, there was the new generation research study conducted in Lithuania: *The New (Z) Generation – Lost or Undiscovered Yet? Identification of Essential Aspects of New (Z) Generation. Child's Learning Processes* (Targamadžė et al., 2015). Its data has shown that the behavior of the new generation is changing under the influence of virtual environment and virtual media in which young people spend quite a lot of their time. A new subculture is forming.

The research focus of the present study was to answer the following research question: What are the new directions of subculture, developing and forming on the crossing of virtual and real spaces, which are manifest in the behavior of the new generation?

The discussed relevance of the research problem enables us to formulate the object of the present research – manifestation of the new generation subculture forming on the crossing of virtual and real space.

The aim of this paper is to analyze and reveal the forming features of the subculture of the new generation existing on the crossing of online and offline spaces. The following research objectives were formulated:

- » On the ground of scientific literature and empirical studies analysis to reveal the manifestation of the new generation subculture development
- » To carry out qualitative research (expert interview) aiming to find out the Lithuanian educational experts' views on the changing behavior of the new generation subculture influenced by virtual environment.

The Methodology of Research

The research ontology is based on the beliefs of social constructivism, according to which, human beings construct their personal understanding, which is not the mirror of their acquired knowledge, but it is the result of their personal perceptions, experiences and reflections, when the knowledge and the meanings are constructed from personal experiences, from relationships between people, things and events (Kukla, 2000, p. 6).

Qualitative research strategy (namely, an expert survey method) is chosen to collect the empirical data, because when investigating objects of a social

world that are thought to be complex and multi-dimensional, qualitative research may provide valuable data of perceiving and understanding that world (Mason, 2002).

In June-July of 2017, there has been a qualitative semistructured interview conducted. The qualitative sample consists of 8 interviewees, who were selected employing convenient sampling and using the criteria which provide evidence about the expert experiences of informants. All informants have university education and academic degrees in pedagogy. All of them have pedagogical work at school experience, two of them hold doctoral degrees in educational sciences. Two of them have no children, the others have children of teen age (our target group). Four of them are working at school now.

The aim of this empirical research was to clarify the experts' perceptions and views on the impact of digital environment on real space subculture and changes in behavior of young people belonging to the new generation which are manifest in educational organisations.

There was the qualitative content analysis of obtained data conducted in order to explore the new generation behavior modifications, as they are seen by experts in school settings. Only part of the research findings obtained (some categories related to the research topic and relevant to the problem discussed in this paper) is presented in this article.

Manifestation of New Generation Subculture Formation: Theoretical Insights

Sociologists M. McCrindle, E. Wolfinger (2010) state that New Generation includes individuals born after 1995 and raised in the digital world. Its emergence is related with the emerging of the Internet and media. J. Palfrey, U. Gasser, C. Maclay and B. Beger (2011, p. 14) state that not all young people fall into this category of *Digital Natives*, who share a common global culture defined less by age than by their experience growing up immersed in digital technology. This experience affects their behavior, interaction with information technologies and information itself, the way they relate to one another. This engagement with digital technologies and electronic media transforms learning, socializing and communication.

When we speak about digital space and media we most often refer to a wide range of specific sites, platforms (Facebook, Instagram, LinkedIn, Twitter, YouTube and others). It may also include blogging, microblogging, online commenting and online gaming – activities in which more and more young people are actively involved.

Leading Internet and technology experts J. Palfrey and U. Gasser (2008) in their book *Born Digital. Understanding the First Generation of Digital Natives*

present a sociological portrait of „Digital Natives“ who differ from the so-called „digital immigrants“ (representatives of older generations). Digital natives spend much of their lives online, not distinguishing between the online and the offline life. They do not think of their digital identity as something different from their real space identity. The researchers point out the following tendencies, which develop under the constant use of digital technologies – abilities to multitask, to express themselves, to relate and communicate with others, to access and use information and create new knowledge. They think it is natural to have an identity representation in two or more different spaces. For them new digital technologies are primary mediators of human-to-human connections transforming human relationships. They are constantly connected. In a virtual space they have plenty of friends they keep a count of. They feel as comfortable in online spaces as they do in offline ones. They don't think of their hybrid lives as anything remarkable. Online friendships are based on many of the same things as traditional friendships – shared interests, frequent interaction (Pal-frey and Gasser, 2008, pp. 5–6). The authors give a detailed account of dangers (e.g. cyberbullying, Internet addiction, information overload, insecurity, etc.) that young people often face in online space. According to their typology digital natives (depending on the activities most often performed in digital space) can be defined as creators, pirates, aggressors and innovators.

Being constantly connected influences brain functioning, which has to constantly deal with new challenges and tasks that are offered by updated digital technologies. Rapidly changing technologies and the intensive use of them activates the brain neurons, which create new neuron connections and do not connect not activated ones. This influences the way the new generation learns and deals with information (Falschlehner, 2014).

In Lithuania, there are not so much research analysing new generation problematics, actually only in recent years there were a few studies conducted.

New generation rather intensively communicates in the virtual space. The increasing amount of information often creates the informational overload. The research conducted by A. Šimelionienė (2015) provides evidence that many young people are not able to objectively and critically evaluate information they are dealing with. They send information as messages, pictures and photos. This constant communication is always related with sending and receiving information, but it is often done having no clear plan or system, not always understanding properly, why and what for it is being done. The reading habits of the new generation are changing. A virtual loop reading mode and impulsiveness lead to misunderstanding and missing of important information, not always catching the meaning of the text read, not connecting it with the context, not thinking of the impulsively sent messages (Šimelionienė, 2015). Consequently the communication (sending and receiving information) in both virtual space and real life situations can be not adequate and well thought of. Using different communication techniques it spreads in a virtual space at a great speed.

A. Šimelionienė (2015) states that students, when looking for information, do not use deep approach. When collecting the data, they are not able to systematize, classify and critically evaluate the obtained data, so the decisions are made without a thorough situation analysis and critical evaluation. There is a break (a divide) forming between objective data and subjective perception of situation forming. That leads to formation of students' disability of proper disposition of obtained information both regarding the sent and the received one (Šimelionienė, 2015, p. 55).

Obviously it is the result of the information overload, which is obtained in virtual space. The selection of information is quite complicated from the points of view of its quality and its usefulness. Information overload makes it more difficult the selection and analysis of particular information, which is often the objective of different learning tasks.

We must acknowledge that the new generation is not illiterate – though that is what the older generation most often think about it. They are literate, only in a different way. The dominant manner of reading is not a linear one (letter by letter, word after word), but a digital, loop reading. It is different, since it is aimed at hypersite and hypertext reading, when with each mouse click a new window, a new page is opened. Such reading, when moving from one window to the other, though fascinating, makes the finding and perception of information more difficult. In digital media (mainly in the Internet) the information is presented not in a linear (concurrent) manner, but in a simultaneous one. This requires totally different reading abilities. Seeking for information the reader has to show the initiative and be creative. One needs to have a quick orientation and different reading abilities (Falschlehner, 2014, pp. 70–71).

But from the point of view of information perception and understanding it may have a lot of gaps (one of them is the text fragmentation, which may not be related with the context). Obviously it is a new, different reading and its perception culture being formed, which influences the formation and evaluation of an individual worldview. Z. Nauckūnaitė (2015, p. 96) points out that reading is an activity, which needs to develop different types of cognitive skills, namely, to decode the meaning, understand the text and learn from it. The basic skills of decoding are the most important, one cannot do without them. In that respect the new generation has more text decoding learning difficulties than the generations before. That is the result of divided attention, the skill which they have developed in the Internet. It makes it difficult to view and keep the line of online reading. Consequently, it does not only influence their manner of reading, but also the formation of the different reading (information receiving and information evaluation) culture in the virtual space (Nauckūnaitė, 2015, p. 96).

There is so much information in the Internet that attracts attention of new generation. This may become the cause of the development of Internet addiction in its users. In recent years this problem worries many of the parents,

teachers and psychiatrists. This addiction is particularly popular among the online gamers. It is obvious that in the next decades to come these numbers will continue to increase (Targamadze et al., 2015).

It is obvious that the new generation receives a lot of information while social networking. This information is subjective, not always secure and trustworthy for it may be created and transformed by members of the network who, as mentioned above, are not always able to critically analyse the received or sent information, to relate the text to the context. Virtual contacts and virtual communication are of great importance to the new generation, for it expands and adds to their real life face-to-face communication. There are virtual communities formed in the networks. Their functioning is grounded on the principles of cooperation and mutual support. Virtual communication as a new form of communication is outpushing the old forms, such as letter and diary writing.

Virtual networking is changing the identity formation of the new generation, which is different from identity formation among pre-digital generations in the sense that there is more experimentation and reinvention of identities, and there are different modes of expression, such as YouTube and blogging. J. Palfrey and U. Gasser (2011, p. 21) state that the new generation tries out different aspects of their identity in experimental ways, both online and offline, they tend to have multiple self-representations.

The Internet has become a virtual laboratory for experiments in identity development. As the new generation enter their teenage years, many of them are creating online profiles as a cornerstone of their identities. For instance, MySpace is the primary tool for flirtation, relationships, and day-to-day communication (Palfrey and Gasser 2008, p. 27).

In virtual worlds, the key act of identity formation is the creation of an “avatar” – a virtual representation of the computer user. In most instances, the avatar is a figure whose actions can be controlled by the user’s computer mouse and keyboard. It is through this figure that the user interacts with the virtual world – both objects and other avatars (that is, other users) (ibid, 28).

As we see there are a lot of possibilities in a virtual space. The increasing number of social networks may have both positive and negative influences on young people. It is important that they should understand the network content and what it is aimed at. They should also understand that in a digital age the negative impact related with instability and insecurity is the result of changing quite often one’s identity. It leads to decrease of young people in control of their identity as others perceive it (ibid, 31).

Naturally a question arises: Why is it important to pay attention to the reading mode, the involvement into the networks, the developing addiction to virtual space when one is at the crossing of virtual and real spaces? Namely at the crossing, intersection, not at the interunion or linking of them, for then

we would be able to speak about the ability of the new generation to receive virtual information, to check it up in real space and have no problems to link it with the context.

Now we notice that they are more and more involved into a virtual environment as if they 'live' in it. This environment has a great impact on the formation of their values, norms and rules. It is obvious that they socialize more in a virtual environment and lack elementary communication with their peers, family members and community.

It is worth mentioning the view of G. Soldatova et al. (2013, p. 8), who state that besides the rapid development of information and mobile communication technologies, the Internet and other virtual environment, it is the globalisation process that makes influence on the value formation of the new generation. For this purpose attractive means (games, advertisements), social networks, attractively illustrated texts etc. are used in order to involve more children and young people into virtual environment.

The authors think that this leads to the development of social autism, when young people from real life worries and problems are hiding in the virtual space, as if it is possible to run away from them. It is the expression of disability to communicate in the real world (Lumpijeva and Volkov, 2013).

Such sticking in a virtual environment is dangerous and risky – one can get into networks of extremists propagating religious and racial discrimination. As P. Smith and S. Livingstone (2017) state:

...not all online risks result in harm. It is not really known how many children have been harmed as a result of an online experience; researchers generally rely on subjective self-report measures, and few have conducted longitudinal studies that can track the later consequences of exposure to risk. Nonetheless, the evidence points to some evidence for harm (Smith and Livingstone, 2017, p. 144).

The same authors state that the new generation are digital natives and it is virtual environment that makes a great impact on them. P. Smith and S. Livingstone (2017) point out to some other negative aspects of this impact, such as:

...cyberbullying, the victims of which express a variety of negative emotions, and cybervictimization, which is associated with a range of psychosocial problems, including affective disorders, depression and behavioural problems, including substance use (Smith and Livingstone, 2017, p. 144.)

It goes without saying that virtual and digital environment draws in, for it creates the possibilities for networking, for one's own dossier creating and changing so we, the educators should think how to help the new generation to develop the skills of how to select and critically evaluate the information, how to develop the common humanistic values and to build up a strong moral backbone, so as to be able to resist all the negative influences of the virtual space.

One more behavior change, which takes place under the influence of digital space, is closely related with the peculiarities of identity formation. It splits – in real space it is of one kind and in the virtual space it is of a different kind. The desire to receive many ‘likes’ for the information presented in a virtual space, desire to show off, presenting the self promoting and self enhancing image of self, constantly changing their personal dossier information – are seen as developing tendency in the (sub)culture of the new generation. W.K. Campbell and J.M. Twenge (2015), who investigated the phenomenon of narcissism, see it as the dark side of individualism, a part of interactive system, which includes self-conceptions, self-esteem and social relationships.

Overall, narcissism can be conceptualized in trait terms as a mixture of grandiosity, entitlement, extraversion and attention seeking. In dynamic terms, narcissism consists of grandiosity maintained through relationships that create status, esteem for the narcissistic individual, but that typically lack emotional depth or caring (Campbell and Twenge, 2015, p. 360).

The authors think that the emerging media, where an individual as anonymous actor interacting with other anonymous actors, would allow for greater narcissism and would become an avenue for increasing narcissism at the individual and cultural level (ibid, p. 365). It is obvious that increasing narcissism inflates their self-esteem, changes the behavior and interferes with the value system development. It also influences their education. O. Schneck (2010) states that education without value fostering is a worthless education, for values do not appear by themselves.

Unfortunately, it is difficult to control and to influence the process of value formation in the virtual space. The attention of researchers should be given to the analysis of the values that are formed and have to be formed by the new generation.

As we see, there are many factors showing that a specific subculture of the new generation is forming. The overview of the conducted studies provide evidence that the virtual environment makes a great impact on the changing behavior of young people, which are manifest in their behavior in the real space environment.

The Influence of Virtual Environment on the Subcultural Behavior of New Generation: Experts' Views

The analysed expert survey data have disclosed a few important aspects, which from the expert point of view show that the subcultural behavior of young people of the new generation learned in virtual environment is manifest in real life everyday situations.

One of the experts notices that communication ethics changes, used in a virtual world is being moved into a real world.

It is manifest in their behavior manners, in vocabulary they use and jokes. At the same time real life communications are often moved into social networks. Teenagers are less involved in real life communication (E3).

This observation is important, firstly, as it points out to the moving of real communication into a virtual space, secondly, the rules of virtual communication ethics are used in real space.

Behavior changes are seen in the way the teenagers communicate with adults (teachers, parents). It is understandable that in the virtual networks the age of people you are networking with does not matter. The appearance of aggressiveness in real behavior may also be related to virtual games, playing them in the Internet they learn the aggressive style of behavior and overtake the model of communication culture. They are often reckless, aggressive and fight when they want to defend themselves (E4).

Experts point out that virtual environment makes a strong influence on how young people perceive themselves, their personality, the self-image they create.

It is difficult to say if virtual environment changes their behavior, but definitely it influences their behavior style, their dressing style, the type of music they listen, the films they watch and the books they choose to read. I have noticed that they are very concerned about their image, they not only want to look like their „idols“, dress like them, but they imitate their manners of behavior and speech (E2).

Virtual space influence is manifest in changing of interests and activities of young people. Experts notice that they want to try new things, about which they usually learn from the people they are networking in Facebook or see in YouTube.

The close communication with members of networking communities involves them so deeply into a virtual world that teenagers (and not only them) spend a lot of time in the networks, also playing computer games. In some secret groups they learn how to overcome difficulties and obstacles in the virtual games and get into a higher game level. Maybe it's nothing bad in it, unless games and socialising do not propagate aggression, extremism and are aimed at development of proper values (E5).

It is difficult not to agree with the views of expert one, who states that in social networks a whole world is opened. Some of the teenagers are very strongly attracted by it, others are not. For some, networking becomes a way of living, for others, it is just a convenient form of communication (E1).

A similar perception was expressed by the other expert (E4):

Some students get stuck in the virtual world and it forms their worldview and world perception. For the others it is only a tool for communicating and for finding the necessary information. Anyway, the virtual environment makes influence on them, their behavior and even on their culture (E4).

Apparently, the main influence on the formation of their worldview, their value system, behavior and culture is made by the Internet and by parents and teachers.

I think, it is important that the educators – parents and teachers – should use the positive influence of the virtual environment for the formation value. We cannot behave like ostriches and not see the bad things which there are in the Internet, we cannot allow the virtual space overtake our children and allow to form a culture different from the real life one (E6).

As we see, the experts acknowledge the influence of the virtual space and the Internet on important aspects of students' subculture. The important points of reference of this culture (like any other culture) are values, which lay the basis for formation of norms and rules of behavior. It is obvious that they are closely related to values and the worldview, which they form while spending so much time in a virtual space. The social networks have their own rules (they may be in written or oral form) and norms of behavior. For instance, one may choose whom to accept or not as Facebook friends, track or not track them, block or unblock access, etc. Similarly sometimes they try to block, track people – classmates, family members, their teachers – in real life situations.

The actions which appropriate in virtual space are often performed in real class situations, without thinking about their adequacy, necessity and importance in the real world (E7).

The learned virtual communication rules are being moved into real world. Experts think that the positive thing about it is that young people spend more time in real, face-to-face communication. The negative – that in comparison they still spend more time for virtual communication.

It is obvious that the lack of real communication does not help in construction of human relationships and in development of positive socialisation. The new generation can participate in virtual communication according to their desires, interests and hobbies, but in real world situations they often face a totally different communication. It often leads to destructive conflicts, not because they have negative feeling about them, but because they simply have no skills necessary for face-to-face communication.

In virtual space they not only can choose the people they want to communicate with, but they can also express their opinions, be critical without any sanctions,

and not be afraid of being criticised, for they know that any time they would be able to retreat and stop communicating. In real life it is different. They do not know the rules of real life communication, they often do not understand reactions and feedback (oral or a written one), which are led by specific body language and face expressions that they receive in the process of face-to-face communication, they do not know how to respond to and evaluate the arising emotions (E7).

Another expert (E2) stresses slightly different aspects:

They have already acquired a different culture of communication and its norms. I notice that for them they are important. It's a pity that our real life cultural norms are being out washed by virtual norms. Support or pushing away effect their emotional state and change the behavior. Teenagers, who receive support in virtual space feel more self-confident in real relationships and are more communicable. The ones receiving psychological pressure, bullying in virtual communication have difficulties in real life communication with peers and lack self confidence (E2).

Stressing the importance of emotions in communication this expert also points out to virtual bullying. If it takes place, it spreads in the network very rapidly and then its impact is very strong. To overcome it young people need help, which as a rule comes from the real space.

It is worth mentioning one more expert (E8) observations. He has noticed that children and young people who have a good example at home, behave in networks in a subtler manner:

they always think their actions over in advance. They, as a rule, have „a strong backbone“ and are able to resist any kind of bullying, they are selective about the virtual information, plan their time, so they use the most useful thing the networks provide, they do not waste their time in the Internet (E8).

Further the same expert (E8) mentions that within the new generation group one may see a different teenager subgroup, which he describes as „rebels“. They actually demonstrate a narcissistic behavior and are forming a subculture that educators are worried about. These teenagers use the networks for bullying the weak ones, so as to show others how „tough“ they are. But the means they use to draw the attention to themselves are not adequate (in photos they put in the Internet boys demonstrate their physical strength, socially unacceptable behavior, use of alcohol and drugs; girls demonstrate their outer „beauty“: excessive use of make-up, unacceptable and strange looking dressing style). The virtual information they usually share is trivial and stupid, which makes other teens blunt.

The expert observations presented above show that they notice the influence of the virtual environment and technologies made on the new generation. These observations inspire us to look for and find in the microenvironment of

the new generation – on the crossing of virtual and real spaces – the possibilities and means, which would be suitable for changing their unacceptable behavior in a virtual space into an adequate and acceptable one, which would help in formation of a moral backbone and development of a subculture which would be built on humanistic values.

Discussion

The appearance and the dominance of virtual environment and its ability to involve the new generation into it using different forms currently is a quite popular theme and the object of both academic and practical discussions (of researchers, teachers and parents and others).

It is understandable why it is in the centre of discussion, for a big part of the new generation is dwelling immersed in the virtual space, which makes a great impact on them. Naturally there are many question which we have to find answers to. What do we know about the new generation, the so-called „born digitals“ or „digital natives“ and the way they learn, communicate, cooperate and construct trustworthy common knowledge? What should we, educators, researchers and parents, do in order to help them not to become hostages of the dangerous virtual space, not to adopt the unacceptable norms and rules of digital behavior? How to protect them from the negative influences of dangerous environment of some social networks which are forming harmful, unacceptable behavior, values and contraculture?

It is obvious that virtual environment does make great impact on the new generation. The developing cultural discordance at the crossing of virtual and real life spaces becomes the main feature of the subculture of the new generation. Different from the older generations the representatives of the new generation cannot use the virtual environment as means of finding information and communication. For them it is not just the tool, but a way of life, so it is natural that this virtual life influences the formation of the contraculture and their new subculture.

It is important to clarify how we can help them in the formation of positive and acceptable subculture. It is not an easy task. It is difficult to find out which networks they are in, what effect on young people subculture they make. What links are being formed in their brains, what associations created, whether they are more related to virtual than to real environment.

Maybe the real environment factors no longer have the influence on their cultural maturity and their personal identity formation as they had before. Obviously G. Falschner (2014) is right, stating that with the changed reading (from linear to loop) mode, a traditional book has lost its knowledge monopoly and it has to find its place among the other rapidly changing media. Though

the importance of a reading skill remains as a basic competence, but in order to have good orientation in multimodal and multimedial spheres one needs to have the ability of digital (loop) reading (Falschner, 2014, p. 12). This creates difficulties to book and textbook writers, who have to take into consideration all the changes taking place under the influence of virtual environment in the new generation learning and culturization.

So looking into the future we should seek for the positive culturization of the new generation trying to avoid the presently existing cultural confrontation of virtual and real space environments. For this purpose we need more neurobiological and social (including educational) studies and research which would help to identify and manage the factors influencing the formation of the new generation culture.

Conclusions

The new generation are individuals who experience the impact of virtual environment. It is manifest in real life factors, including: their dwelling in the virtual space (mainly social networks in which they spend a lot of time); keeping to the virtual space norms and rules; changes in the manner and style of speaking and dealing with the information. Anyway, it signals about the penetration of specific norms and values into the real life of the new generation. This becomes evident in the analysed crossing of virtual and real spaces. This intersection can become contraculture (when there is the difference in values) and subculture (when there is no value confrontation, but there are some behavior modifications manifest).

Striving for harmonisation of one's virtual and real space, there should be norms, rules, outer culture manifestations and some other factors taken into consideration. It is important to give attention to common humanist value formation, which may lead to the interconnection of these spaces. At the same time, it would be possible to separate morally acceptable things from not acceptable ones, critically perceive the communicated information focusing on the formation of the divided world.

The presented analysis of theoretical and empirical insights allows to identify the directions of the formation of new subculture:

- » ***Changes in virtual information reception, perception and presentation.*** Particularly, there are poor skills in information perception and presentation. There are no information selection criteria, no plan, no objective and critical analysis of virtual information found. It is often presented without linking it to the real life context. When presented, the information is not properly structured and systematized, it is not always checked up for the trustworthiness.

- » ***The developing differences in text reading, its comprehension and presentation.*** The developing dominance of loop mode reading interferes with the formation of holistic view. Consequently it leads to text fragmentation, different accentuations, distant from the presented text itself. The interrelation between the text parts, between the text and its context disappear, if presented verbally. And text, particularly presented in written form, is not properly structured, lacks proper argumentation, generalisation and is not emotionally coloured (for this purpose the pictures, smile signs are often used).
- » ***The formation of particular norms, rules and values in social networks.*** If one participates in these networks, he/she must follow these rules, which are related to certain norms and values. It is important that these norms and values do not contradict to socially acceptable moral norms and values and promote the social, professional, cultural self-development and personal maturity. But it also happens when virtual norms and values contradict to the ones existing in the real world, so their use in real life situations may lead to disruptive behavior and destructive interpersonal relationships.
- » ***The divide between a virtual and real world is manifest in the personal identity formation.*** In virtual space it is being formed by oneself depending on one's own and others' evaluations (e.g. it is possible to count „likes“, create one's own dossier, etc.). The real world has different identity evaluation criteria, namely, citizenship, nationality, sex, education, CV, etc. The imagined, virtual self does not always coincide with the real self evaluation. That may lead to confrontation between the perceived own self and seen by others, that is why quite often there is an environment more convenient and acceptable chosen and together with it there is the tendency to overtake the forming culture.

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