The Students` Representations of Ambition, Personal Space and Trust

Oksana V. Barsukova

Southern Federal University, Academy of Psychology and Pedagogy, Rostov-on-Don, Russia; Email: knesinka@mail.ru

Mozgovaya N.N.

Krishchenko E.P.

Southern Federal University, Academy of Psychology and Pedagogy, Rostov-on-Don, Russia

Abstract

This article presents the results of an empirical study of students` representations of ambition, personal space and trust. The ambition is understood by students as a motive of social activity, as aspiration to glory and a high social status. Most of students consider themselves ambitious people. In general, the students estimate the level of ambition as high or average. The moral assessment of ambition is ambiguous, however the positive moral assessment prevails. According to students, most of the teachers 75%, are inclined to deliberately break their personal space. The main type of violation from the teacher has verbal and nonverbal character – 65%; as a result of violation of their personal space by the teacher of psychology they most often feel: discomfort in the interpersonal relations with the teacher 65%; violation of communication 60%; frustration (malice, irritation, disappointment, etc.) 50%. Significant distinctions in indicators of average values on a trust scale to themselves at seniors and first-year students testify that with seniors the trust mechanism to oneself is expressed in much smaller degree.

Keywords: ambition, personal space, trust, person, student, representation.

1. Introduction

To study students′ ambition, personal space and trust is very important for psychology. According to B. G. Ananiev's definition, the student age is a special period of development of a personality when a future expert and citizen is educated, consolidation and development of many social functions, active familiarizing with professional, moral, esthetic and other values (Ananiev, 2002).

The main objective of our research is to study how the students understand the meaning of such definition as ambition, personal space and trust. In particular:

– What is ambition? What aims do ambitious people have? Is it good or bad to be ambitious person? Do students consider themselves ambitious or not?
– What is personal space? What are parts of students′ personal space? Who breaks the borders of student personal space at the university? What are consequences of valuation of personal space for students?
– What is trust? What is trust to oneself? What is the level of trust to oneself at students of different courses?

In the empirical research we were guided by the following provisions of the Russian classical and modern psychology:

– integrative approach to psychology of human (B.G. Ananiev, V.N. Panferov);
– psychological and anthropological approach to human (V.I. Slobodchikov, E.I. Isayev);
– subjective paradigm in psychology of personality (V.A. Petrovsky);
– modern Russian researches of ambition (O.V. Barsukova), personal space (N.N. Mozgovaya, S.K. Nartova-Bochaver), trust (T.P. Skripkina, E.P. Krischenko).

Such approach allows us to develop the design of empirical research, to obtain reliable empirical data and to use the results in further research.

2. Literature Review

2.1 The students` representations of ambition

The ambition is motivational formation and represents aspiration of a person to be a significant and a recognized personality to others for real achievements, important both for person and for other people (Barsukova, 2014). In other words, the ambition is a desire of the person:

- to improve the status, position in the world;
- to find popularity, glory, power;
- to succeed, reach a certain result and heights.

Ambition is the force which makes a person move ahead and reach any heights on a promotional and social ladder.

The problem of motivation of students is seems to be the actual one for modern Russian psychology and is considered as a force of entering a higher education institution, as the leading motive of educational activity of students. Ambition as a motive of subject activity of students can be shown in various spheres of life – educational, professional, personal, etc. The aspiration of a young man for a challenge in various situations, is aimed, first of all, at understanding and learning of oneself, one`s potential, at search of vocation, at finding consistence and independence. Pointing to close connection of self-determination and need for self-affirmation, the motives of self-affirmation are shown in aspiration of a young man to influence other people, to control their behavior, to be authoritative etc. They are also shown in aspiration to prove the truth, to win a dispute, to impose one`s own views and solutions of problems.

Ambition as a phenomenon of subjectivity carries out the function of self-realization in a profession and life in general. An ambitious person actively realizes one`s potential in the spheres of social activity, significant for him; as a rule, it is about professional and career growth, about a place on "a professional scale". Success or not success of self-transformations and transformation of a social situation will define the importance and recognition of a person by a family, colleagues and administration, and in a wider context such person can gain the world recognition and make history (for example, to become the Nobel Prize laureate).

Ambition as aspiration means (Barsukova, 2011):

- the subject — an ambitious person;
- other person or other people, whose recognition the ambitious person seeks;
- self-reflection, self-assessment (Self-intimate);
- the purpose — achievement of recognition and importance which are shown in achievement of the power, glory, success (social or career) and so forth. (I-want and/or I-must);
- position and the status of a person in social hierarchy (I-real).

As noted above, ambition is connected with the scale and the importance of those tasks and affairs for which the personality takes responsibility as the subject of the life. That is why the students period as a certain stage of human life is of special interest in respect of the analysis of ambition; it is a special period of formation of the personality and active formation of social consciousness, at the same time, it is a special social group with its norms, system of relationship, etc.

3. Results and Discussions

3.1 Analysis result

A research of representations of students` concepts about ambition. The   integrative approach to the person`s psychology was taken as methodological basis of research (Barsukova, 2011; Panferov, 2002). The research of the concepts of ambition was conducted on the basis of the mini-composition "How I understand ambition". Engineering and humanitarian students of Southern Federal University and Don State Technical University took part in the research: the total of 70 students (57 young men and 23 girls) aged from 16 till 20 years. The distinctions in representations of students of different specialities, and also in representations of girls and young men weren't revealed. The analysis of mini-compositions was carried out by means of the content analysis. By means of the quantitative content analysis the frequency of occurrence of characteristics of ambition was counted. The following categories were applied to carrying out the qualitative content analysis:

- definition of ambition, including the ambition subject as motivational formation and means of achievement as moral formation;

– ambition self-assessment;
– moral assessment of ambition.

At the final stage of research the individual expert assessment was carried out. Three candidates of psychological sciences acted as experts.

The performed analysis let us obtain the following results, we will consider them according to the allocated categories.

The concept of ambition. The analysis of mini-compositions revealed that the students refer ambition to three mental formations – motivational, reflexive, moral. It should be noted that in all definitions (174 definitions) there is no ambition reference to one mental formation, the ambition is referred by students to two mental formations at a time. Nevertheless quantitatively the definitions are expressed in different ways (p=f: N):

– motivational formation – aspiration to glory, a high social status, etc. (91 determination, p=0,65);
– reflexive formation – internal feeling of honor, conscientiousness, self-esteem, etc. (43 definitions, p=0,307);
– moral formation – honesty and truthfulness to other people, etc. (40 definitions, p=0,285).

Ambition reference to motivational or reflexive formations rather fully corresponds to the ambition definition in psychological sources. The understanding of ambition as moral formation corresponds to psychological understanding only in a slightly degree; in this case the difference in the vector of relation to other people is noted – in psychological sources, as a rule, the negative, manipulative attitude, in the students` compositions – the positive relation.

The subject of ambition as a motivational formation is honor, glory, a high social status, honors. The means of achievement of the ambitious aspirations, presented in the students` compositions, can be characterized as manipulative and not always moral, for example "to stop at nothing", "against all the odds" etc. In this case it is possible to speak about some contradiction in the moral assessment of ambition and means of its achievement. As it will be noted below, since the ambition, according to the majority of students is a positive moral quality, all means of its achievement named by students, obviously belong to immoral, negative. From this angle, the ambition self-assessment brings some bewilderment too, since the majority of students consider themselves ambitious.

Ambition self-assessment. The self-assessment of ambition was presented in the compositions of students and besides, they specified the degree of expressiveness of ambition. With that, in some compositions (in 24.3%, i.e. in 17 of 70) there are explanations why exactly to this or that extent the student estimates expressiveness of ambition or its absence. The analysis of the compositions revealed the following features of ambition self-assessment by the students:

– a student considers himself ambitious – 50.6%;
– a student considers himself ambitious, but his ambition is moderate, "normal", "medium" – 22.2%;
– a student considers himself "somewhat" ambitious – 8.6%;
– a student considers himself ambitious "in small degree" – 8.6%;
– a student doesn't consider himself ambitious – 9.8%.

Thus, the majority of students (90%) consider themselves to a greater or smaller extent ambitious people.

As noted above, in 17 compositions the students gave explanations (26 explanations since in some cases self-assessment was explained by several features) to the self-assessment of ambition. For example, the students considering themselves ambitious (17 explanations), explained their self-assessment as follows: "I am ambitious because I am an honest"; "I value my reputation"; "I try to be better than others", etc.

Moral assessment of ambition. Moral assessment:
– Positive assessment of ambition: ambition is a merit, it`s good to be ambitious – 44.6%;
– Positive assessment of ambition: it is good to be ambitious, but moderately – 12%;
– Dialectic assessment of ambition: ambition is both positive and negative – 33.7%;
– Negative assessment of ambition: it`s good to be ambitious – 6%;
– No moral assessment of ambition – 3.6%.

In some compositions (41 of 70 compositions) along with a moral assessment of ambition the students explained why they estimated ambition this way. The positive moral assessment of ambition was explained as follows: "ambition promotes personal growth"; "an ambitious person tries to be better"; "people like such a person", etc.

The dialectic assessment of ambition was reasoned, in particular, by words that "it`s good to be ambitious since the lack of ambition is a dislike of person for oneself, and surplus is an egoism", etc.

Finally, the negative assessment of ambition was followed by such arguments as "an ambitious person doesn`t understands honor correctly", "an ambitious person revenges", etc.

Apparently from explanations to a moral assessment, its criteria are self-relation and attitude towards other people.

Summing up the research results of students` concepts of ambition, it is possible to draw the following conclusions:

The ambition is understood by students as a motive of social activity, a phenomenon of the personality and interpersonal relations. Such understanding corresponds to definition of ambition in psychological sources.

In the majority of compositions ambition is understood as motivational formation, as aspiration to glory and a high social status. Also ambition is defined as reflexive formation, as feeling of honor and self-esteem and as moral formation, as sincere attitude towards other people.

Most of students consider themselves ambitious people. At that, the degree of expressiveness of ambition will vary – excessively, moderately, slightly. In general, the students estimate the level of ambition as high or average. Only about 10% of students don't consider themselves ambitious.

The moral assessment of ambition is ambiguous, however the positive moral assessment (more than half of estimates) prevails, also there is a dialectic and negative assessment of ambition.

Further study of ambition concepts, in particular, cross-cultural research of concepts and research of concepts of the people of different age groups seem to be perspective.

3.2   The students` representations of personal space.

The phenomenon of personal space is in the area of close attention of psychological, biological, social sciences in recent years. In this phenomenon there are sources of such ways and forms of relationship as hierarchy and domination, cooperation, aggression, protection, identification and other types of behavioural activity of the person, and also development of subjectivity of the personality. The personal space of the person gives it the chance to realize itself more on a substantial scale, not only at micro- and meso-, but also at the macrolevel.

Thus, the personal space is the integrated psychological formation which can be structured according to functions (identifying, representative, controlling and protective) and according to components (individual, physical, spatial, etc.) (Kotova, Mozgovaya, 2002).

For a long time the psychology of personal space has been studied contextually, inside other sciences and psychological problems: personal freedom (Z.I. Kuzmina, etc.), "psychological vital space" (K. Levin, etc.), ""I" and "Others"" (K. Jung, etc.), age features of the personality (V. S. Mukhina, L. I Bozhovich, A.V. Tolstykh, I.S. Kohn, N. V. Pinyayeva, etc.), psychology of influence (E.V.Sidorenko, E.L. Dotsenko, P. Mitsich, etc.), psychology of virtual realities (N. A. Nosov, V. N. Toporov, etc.), regulation of spatial contact between people (Ya. Shchepansky, M. Heydmets, etc.), etc.

Development of the personal space concept is based on V.A. Petrovsky`s theory of the personality subjectivity and on A.N. Leontyev`s definition of the personality. According to the point of view of V.A. Petrovsky – "the personality in subject measurement" (Petrovsky, 1996) is characterized as: the subject of the own activity (individuum or individual subject); the subject of substantive work (or figure); subject of activity of communication; subject of consciousness (or I). Subjectivity – the most significant manifestation of the personality. It allows the person to think of what he is. Emergence of works on subjectivity of the personality (A.N. Leontyev, P. I. Zinchenko, B. S. Bratus`, S. L. Rubinstein, V.A. Petrovsky, E.V. Ilyenkov, etc.) highlighted such problems as: observance of psychological distance by a person, manipulation in communication, preservation of personal space of the person, etc.

Relying on V.A. Petrovsky`s situation concerning subjectivity of the personality, we assume that the personal space can be presented as subject formation. This is the space which is set by the personality. This level of the personality is presented as "being an author" (Petrovsky, 1996) of the person, relating to creation of his/her own life. In certain situations the subject seeks to protect himself, to find a "place" - personal space to feel freedom, the sovereignty of the personality.

Thus, the personal space is the subject formation that has difficult psychological structure, formed by interaction of the components which are reflexed by students in the measure it is presented in their concepts and the representations reflecting psychological essence of this phenomenon. The personal space is subject, therefore, as a result of its violation a person involuntarily turns on the mechanism of psychological protection of individual liberty, integrity and sovereignty. Designation and allocation of borders of the "own" personal space by an individual indicates not only "closeness" of this or that area of the person`s identity, but also the sovereignty, integrity, identity of the subject, existence of trust to other people, society (Mozgovaya, 2002).

The relevance of the research of personal space of a person is also caused by the need of studying and optimization of relationship of teachers and students in higher education institution. Aspiration for cooperation, preservation of individual liberty of the student and teacher, forming of personal and professional qualities promote successful pedagogical interaction and the constructive interpersonal relations. In this regard psychological research of the identity of the student as age group of late youth are of special interest (Abramova, 1998).

Establishment the subject - the subject relations contributing to preservation and expansion of personal space, both the student, and teacher will be result of realization of these conditions. The system of interaction "teacher-student" in the pedagogical higher education institution comprises huge potential opportunities of psychological, cultural level, development of the identity of teacher and student in the broadest understanding. Acquiring scientific knowledge and practical abilities, the identity of both subjects of educational process are acquainted with the culture of relations, interactions, behavior.

Thus, the personal spaces of teacher and student extend due to the fact, respecting and accepting oneself, feeling one`s own value and uniqueness, such persons accept and respect others, recognize their uniqueness and personal autonomy, by this expanding personal space of others.

3.2.1 Analysis result

During the study of the concepts of higher education institution students of personal space, we revealed that it can be qualified as significant, difficult formation of the personality (60%) and psychological distance (40%) (Mozgovaya, 2010).

During the content analysis, according to the students` concepts the personal space was qualified as: (1) significant, difficult psychological formation 60%; (2) "that sphere of my personality which is seen to me; I generate this space, I exist in it, and only I choose whom to let in"; (3) "I make the space by my activity and I act in this space"; (4) "space, in which my personality is realized in all its manifestations "; (5) "the psychological space where a person feels surely and reliably, under protection"; (6) "individual space that nobody interferes unless I want it" (Mozgovaya, 2010).

Also the analysis of results revealed the following: according to students, most of the teachers 75%, are inclined to deliberately break their personal space. The main type of violation from the teacher has verbal and nonverbal character – 65%. The same teachers of psychology 19%, according to respondents, break their personal space constantly and as much as possible. Students refuse to consult the same teachers on any questions. Most often the violation of personal space is recorded when carrying out individual consultations and seminars 35%. On any problem the students will address those 28,5% of the psychological faculty teachers who don't break personal space.

So, the teacher who doesn't break personal space of a student, observes personal freedom: inviolacy of human beings at the verbal, nonverbal, verbal and nonverbal level; inviolacy of the private territory (body, personal belongings, etc.); a freedom of worship - the right to practise any religion, lifestyle, preferences (musical, literary, etc.).

According to the students` concepts, as a result of violation of their personal space by the teacher of psychology they most often feel: discomfort in the interpersonal relations with the teacher 65%; violation of communication 60%; frustration (malice, irritation, disappointment, etc.) 50%.

In the course of work with students the growth of positive changes was observed: improvement of perception of teachers by students, the awareness by students of interaction features in the system " teacher - student", the change of strategy of interaction with teachers, coursemates, etc. The changed ideas of students of personal space, influenced their answers: aggressive forms of emotional reaction (anger, venomous expressions, claims, etc.) and interpersonal antipathy decreased, the positive statements about professional activity of teachers, their personal qualities appeared, the level of confidential statements grew.

The data of empirical study show that modern educational practice not only of pedagogical higher education institution demands increase of the level of communicative competence, both with teachers and students. It was also established that, when students of higher education institution reflex and differentiate their personal space, they are capable to recognize its existence and the need of preservation it with others. The main condition of the personal space preservation   in interaction system "teacher - student" is adequate idea of this phenomenon with the subjects of educational process. The adequacy of ideas depends on forming the knowledge of this concept, the most typical cases of its violation.

Thus, the personal space is defined as subjectively significant fragment of life, specifying actual activity, human life strategy. It includes a complex of physical, social and purely psychological phenomena which a person identifies oneself with(the territory, personal subjects, social affections, attitudes, etc.). These phenomena become significant in the context of psychological situation, acquiring personal sense for a subject, and start being protected by all physical and psychological means available. The key place in the phenomenology of personal space is taken by the condition of the person`s borders — the physical and psychological markers separating the area of personal control and privacy of one person from that area of another (Mozgovaya, 2012).

3.3   The students` representations of trust

Development issues of trust in the national psychology caused understanding of the fact that confidential relationship to the world refers to the problem of vital human relationship. In the course of theoretical studies of the subject`s relationship at the transition from school to university, we found the sense of maturity to be the main tumor of adolescence, that defines new quality of subject relations with the outside world, trying the previously unknown, adult system of relations that changes not only the nature of relationships with others, but also the relation of a subject to itself. At the same professional identity as successful realization of the main need of the young people suggests revision of the previous system a young man to oneself and to the meaningful environment. In case the forming personality moves to its maturity step by step, the youth period is an adaptation period in «adult world». The youth`s degree of integrity among his peers mostly determines his future adaptation, the natural «accustomization» to the wide social environment. Therefore, his understanding of his relations with other people gets the primary value. In this connection, we find it possible to pay attention to the fact, that in S. L. Rubinstein's treatment, the formation of a subject is connected with the person`s approvement of the life and strengthening of another person`s life, his identity, worthiness; that the subject treats another as to the fact of formation of its essence, treats other personality as a problem, taking into account all completeness of its essence, and recognizes the rights of others to self-determination and freedom (Albukhanova-Slavskaya, 1981).

The main stage of the formation of subjectivity, as understanding of "authorship of own life" (V.I.Slobodchikov, E.I.Isayev) by a young man is during the study in higher education institution and the beginning of professional self-determination. It will be expressed simultaneously in autonomy from adults, and in creation of the new, adult system of the relations and value orientations. Therefore leaving school as the main stage at which the young man takes one of the main decisions of the future life (whom to be) is one of the basic stages of socialization and formation of the subject, being expressed both in an autonomy from adults, and in formation of adult system of the relations. Besides, the autonomy, as well as self-identity, are the main indicators of personal development of a young man, allowing him to assume the rights and duties of an adult (Remshmidt, 1994).

A young man wants t be perceived as adult enough, seeking to reach this by individualization. Even though the former system of relations with people around remains, it undergoes essential changes. At this stage of development mankind is the partner of the young man with which he sets activity relations, mediated by the system of social values and ideals (Slobodchikov, Isayev, 1996).

However the formation of constructive relations with the world around is possible only with the person`s trust, both to itself, and to the world because the trust is a fundamental condition of interaction of the person with the world (Skripkina, 1997). But the ratio of the level of trust to the world and trust to oneself is in a condition of mobile balance which, being changeable, is broken. Violation of this balance causes a tendency to find balance thanks to which the subject learns himself and the world around. By acquiring the relation of others or the world, making the generalized image of this another, a young man, reflexing the attitude towards him, creates the inner world and builds a system of the attitudes towards itself as to the subject of the new social relations. Therefore a change of a social situation of development at adolescent age involves, first of all, reorganization of the former system of relations, their orientation on adult type of interaction that they didn't have before. Despite the fact that claims of "maturity" at school age are expressed rather well, nevertheless the true maturity can't be shown due to dependence, both behavioural and emotional, and also economic from parents. And since the trust to itself, according to T.P. Skripkina, is a condition of existence of the personality as independent sovereign subject of activity, capable to set and reach own purposes, perhaps, in a new situation of development, in the course of formation of true subjectivity, it will be the mechanism that will play one of crucial roles in the creation of a system of new relations of the subject to both to itself, and people around (Skripkina, 1997).

A certain measure of trust to oneself, according to T.P. Skripkina, assumes existence of a valuable position on the subject's attitude towards itself and to the world. This relation is formed through own values, and the new situation of development, in connection with the young man`s entrance into a new social community, also assumes the change of values, moreover, for the subject to be accepted by a new social community - students, he needs to build and identify the values with those, prevailing in new, wider high school system. Only then the subject will be congruent to this community, it will find self-identity, and then the difficult system of interrelations of the person and society will find compliance.

In this regard, our basic theoretical assumption is as follows. We believe that transition to a new social level - students, the statement of adult position will inevitably increase the general level of trust to oneself.

3.3.1 Analysis result

Believing that the trust to oneself is the phenomenon allowing the subject to take a certain valuable position in relation to itself and, proceeding from this position, to build own vital strategy, we compared an average value of level of trust to oneself (T.P. Skripkina's technique) with seniors and first-year students.

Significant distinctions in indicators of average values on a trust scale to themselves at seniors and first-year students (t-criterion=2.638) testify that with seniors the trust mechanism to oneself is expressed in much smaller degree. The received empirical indicators testify that with seniors, despite wild growing-up, the feeling of internal bondage in actions and deeds still remains, and in this connection they have to coordinate the acts with the next environment more than first-year students. Entering a higher educational institution assumes experience of important vital success which, psychologically, is accompanied by increase of confidence in oneself, in understanding the feeling of internal freedom accompanying occurred jump in final formation of the maturiry maturity. Trust level to itself at first-year students sharply raises in connection with their ability not only to set the vital purposes, but also to reach them. And as implementation of vital plans is the main objective of adolescent age, getting the school-leaving certificate and leaving school itself is the fact that raises the level of trust to oneself, and realization of a professional choice – entering the higher education institute, confirms trust to oneself as conditions of internal freedom and independence, as the bases of original subjectivity.

The position stated by us is coordinated with T.P. Skripkina's assumption that one`s credibility is full mastering of oneself, by one`s essence as ability to independently set the goals and to work according to them, keeping an adequate critical position to oneself, the ability to anticipate results of actions before their execution, to independently build the strategy of reaching the goals according to internal personal meanings (Skripkina, Krishchenko, 2010).

The analysis of the empirical data obtained by us allows to conclude that during the first year of higher education institute there is a jump in the subject`s personal development, connected with increase of level of trust to oneself that can testify the formation of original subjectivity of a young man.

4. Conclusion

Summing up the results of the research of some phenomena of subjectivity presented in article, it is possible to draw the following conclusions:

1. Subjectivity is the difficult, many-sided phenomenon including components from various mental spheres of the personality.
2. Student time is the period of active development and manifestation of subjectivity in various spheres of the person`s activity and, in particular, in educational space of higher education institution.
3. The trust, ambition and personal space can be considered as manifestation of subjectivity.
4. The ambition is a motivational mental formation, aspiration of the person to become the significant and recognized personality for other people. As manifestation of subjectivity, ambition assumes setting a goal by a person and its active achievement.
5. The personal space is the difficult psychological formation, including various structural components and carrying out various functions.
6. The trust to oneself and others is the fundamental condition of interaction of a person with the world. The trust to oneself is the condition of existence of the personality as independent sovereign subject of activity.
7. Continuation of research of these phenomena as manifestations of subjectivity of the personality in interrelation with each other, in their dynamic development seems perspective.

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