

## **From pretend play to identity formation. The virtual reality context**

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In the paper I will present a look at pretend play activity in the pre-school period of childhood, and its consequences for the process of identity formation in adolescence, through L. S. Vygotsky's and E. H. Erikson's theories. Both of them are crucial for socio-cultural paradigm in psychology. Furthermore I want to take up an issue of virtual reality (e. g. computer games, television, Internet) as a playground and to analyse some of its possible developmental functions. In the first part of the paper I reconstruct the most important aspects of transformation in the sphere of higher mental functions in the zone of proximal development of the child. Increasing primacy of meaning and its imaginative representation over sensory perception of the real object in play activity is the core of this reformulation. This leads to proceeding ability to operate with pure meaning of the word and results with using memory at will, active imagination, ability to differentiate the imaginary from the real and also to conform to social rules.

Then I would like to present E. H. Erikson's view on the play activity. The pretend play gives possibility to find some accepted socio-cultural forms to realise impulses that can't be realised directly - in reality - because of the cultural prohibition. At the same time child participates in negotiating and explaining with present adults the meaning of the social rules and roles what makes sublimation and socialising in play possible. The process is of significant consequence to the later identity formation through adolescence.

In the third part of the paper I approach to the issue of virtual reality considering its influence on the pre-school child development through the theories by Vygotsky and Erikson and emphasising rather dangers and risks than possible benefits.

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