A Study on the Characteristics and Functions of College Students’ Responsibility Identity

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Abstract: The core purpose of responsibility education for college students is the cultivation of responsibility identity. From the perspective of the psychological structure, the formation of responsibility identity of college students must go through an imperceptible process of cognitive identity of social responsibility to emotional identity and to practical identity. College students' responsibility identity has the characteristics of stability in dynamics, practicality in interaction, and diversity in differentiation. In respect of function, the responsibility identity of college students can strengthen social identity, promote individual morality and lead the social value orientation.

Introduction

The responsibility education is the key of college moral education, and the cultivation of responsibility identity is the core purpose of the responsibility education. College students' social responsibility identity is directly related to whether they can initiatively take responsibility and conscientiously fulfill their responsibilities. Therefore, the study on college students' responsibility identity not only enriches the theory of social identity, but also bears important practical significance. College students' responsibility identity is a process that the college students as the subject of identity, firstly make psychological acceptance and value choice on the basis of understanding and recognizing their social responsibilities, and then voluntarily accept their own social responsibilities and initiatively transform it into their long-term and stable intrinsic qualities such as understanding, emotion, will, and ability, and ultimately taking it as a guideline on their behavior and practice.

The Psychological Structure of College Students’ Responsibility Identity

The essence of college students' responsibility identity is their independent choice of the responsibility idea. It is a complex spiritual and practical activity, which also needs to follow the general law of identity. Therefore, college students' social responsibility identity must go through an imperceptible process from cognitive identity of social responsibility, to emotional identity, and then to the practical identity.

Cognitive identity. The mainstream of social psychology defines that the cognition, as the most basic psychology activity, is a process of knowledge acquisition or knowledge application or information processing. [1] Cognitive identity of social responsibility is the understanding and mastery of the basic connotation and elements of social responsibility. Cognitive identity is the premise of college students' social responsibility identity. It is a process that the college students first make affirmative evaluation on the basis of high recognition of social responsibility they should undertake, and further show psychological tendency of internal acceptance and initiative.
practice. To achieve cognitive identity, we must scientifically and accurately understand what social responsibility is, clarify that social responsibility is a task, duty, and mission an individual should take for the country, society, and the others, and it is also a liability for the well-being of others and the development and progress of society. At the same time, in line with the features of responsibility such as historicity and specificity, the current social responsibility of college students also specifically refers to the task, mission and responsibilities that the college students should consciously assume when practicing the core socialist values and participating in the great national mission of achieving Two Centenary Goals and the Chinese Dream.

**Emotional identity.** “Emotion is a kind of psychological experience referring to people’s attitudes including affirmation and negation, satisfaction and dissatisfaction, enjoyment and disgust”[2] Moreover, emotion is a motivation for practice. Once an emotion is formed, it has strong stability and becomes an intermediate link in the formation of identity. It is not only the deepening and affirmation of cognitive identity, but also the basis and premise of practical identity. It plays a regulatory and controlling role in the entire process of identity. The emotional identity of college students' social responsibility is the sublimation of cognitive identity. It is a process that the college students first truly accept of the social responsibilities that they should bear, then internalize it into their own responsibility system, next form a positive emotional experience and further become a firm will.

**Practical identity.** Practical identity is the conscious fulfillment of moral principles and norms of a society by the behavioral subject in their social activities, under the control and regulation of cognition, emotion, will, and belief. Practical identity is the final stage, the highest realm and the core of responsibility identity. It requires the identity subject to regard social responsibility as its own behavioral standard and guidelines consciously, initiatively and voluntarily, and to achieve the harmony between individuals and society. The practical identity of college students' social responsibility is a stage to reconstruct their original idea of responsibility and guide their own behavior in accordance to their own social responsibility.

**Characteristics of College Students' Responsibility Identity**

College students' responsibility identity not only has the characteristics of identity in general, but also has its own characteristics due to the particularity of the group, which is the dialectical unity of the two.

**The stability in dynamics.** Responsibility identity is not invariable but dynamically developing with the progress of the national economic society and the growth of college students themselves, which will eventually achieve stability in dynamics. As the British scholar Giddens points out, identity is a dynamic and endless process that human beings create. [3] Firstly, responsibility identity is historic. It is formed under certain historical conditions and is endowed with new requirements and connotations following the progress of the times. Secondly, responsibility identity is a dynamic construction process. Constant construction, deconstruction and construction are involved, which forms spiraling rising and dynamic balanced process that college students continuously get close to and accept their social responsibilities emotionally and psychologically, further learn the social responsibilities from cognition to practice, and from practice to deeper cognition. Thirdly, responsibility identity trends towards stability with active adjustment by the subject of identity. Responsibility identity, as a process of building a sense of belonging, embodies the college student's initiative choice of certain responsibility. In the maturity process of the values,
college students will adjust the formed responsibilities and will continue to reexamine their own value judgments and choices, and consequently reaching stability with dynamic adjustment.

**The practicality in interaction.** Marxism believes that sociality is human’s essential attribute, and that all the social life is essentially practical. [4] Identity is the result of people's social interaction. Identity does not arise spontaneously, but is formed through self-care and normative learning in the complex social interaction and social practice. Only through social interaction can people clearly define their relationship with others, thereby defining their own status and roles. The same is responsibility identity. It is impossible to catch and achieve the responsibility psychology, emotion and attitude without corresponding responsibility behavior, since all kinds of responsibility identities must prove themselves in specific practical activities. The responsibility identity of college students as a practice of dealing with social relations, takes shape in their social communication and social life. Whether it is responsibility for oneself, for others, for the country, or for the world, the responsibility identity all reflects characteristic of social interactivity and practicality.

**The diversity in differentiation.** On the one hand, due to differences in individual's ideology, quality and personality traits, their responsibility identity will show heterogeneous and complicated diversity; on the other hand, the key stage of individual’s values maturity is the youth when the values of college students are not fully shaped and are apt to be influenced by external factors and the environment, therefore responsibility identity is differentiated and diverse. As the American anthropologist Jonathan Friedman pointed out, human’s identity does not occur in vacuum, but in an existent objective world. [5] In other words, responsibility identity is the production influenced by social environment and social relations. What’s more, the open and pluralistic modern society where the young college students live further promotes the differentiation and diversity of their responsibility identity.

**The Function of College Students' Responsibility Identity**

**College students’ responsibility identity strengthens social identity.** Responsibility identity can promote the positive interaction between college students and the society. Responsibility identity propels college students to perform responsible behavior in accordance with social norms. When college students' ideas and behaviors conform to the set social norms and standards, they will receive praise and approval from the society, thus get self-satisfactory in value realization, and consequently are more willing to shoulder their own responsibility, which ultimately forms a positive interaction.

In the formation of college students’ responsibility identity, they can deepen their understanding of the social system, as well as the identity, approval and conviction of the values. Positive social emotions will be produced in this process, which will then lead to positive social behavior. This process is also a process of socialization for college students, through which college students will take active participation in social construction and gain more opportunities to interact with the society. And with the active and conscious interaction, they will also inevitably enhance the understanding of the social system, as well as the identity, approval and conviction of the values.

**College students’ responsibility identity promotes individual morality.** Responsibility commitment is the source of all moral values. [6] Responsibility is the core element of ethical quality, and it dominates the highest level in the entire ethical system and plays an integral role for other ethical elements. In a sense, morality is the conscious fulfillment of role-responsibility.
Responsibility identity promotes the real generation of individual morality. An effective role-responsibility commitment will build an individual who is morally valuable, while conversely will deprive one’s moral worth. No matter which role is chosen, college students must assume or at least partially assume responsibility of the role as long as they perform the role. Under the explicit sense of responsibility and through effective and perpetual role-responsibility commitment, college students become men of morality with spirit of responsibility.

**College students' responsibility identity leads social value orientation.** Young college students are the most active and vigorous social force and play a pioneering role in promoting historical development and social progress. College students have reached the age of fully shouldering responsibility, and are the backbone of the future society. Their attitude towards life responsibility will, to a certain extent, directly determine the dominant value of the society in the coming decades. Therefore, whether college students can establish responsibility identity is tightly related to whether they have the sense of social responsibility, whether they can or to what extent they can take the historic mission, and it also plays the profound and strategic role in the construction of the well-off society in an all-round way, the construction of a strong socialist modernized country, and the realization of great rejuvenation of Chinese nation.

College students' responsibility identification has rich connotation and functions, and has its own inherent logic and characteristics as well. In the implementation of college students' responsibility education, we must comprehensively grasp the connotations and characteristics mentioned above, give full play to the subjectivity of college students, achieve their high recognition of social responsibility, and propel them to realize life values in vivid social practice.

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