

# PECULIARITIES OF PERSONAL SELF-IMPROVEMENT IN EARLY AND LATE ADOLESCENCE

**Julia Gorbaniuk,**

*The John Paul II Catholic University of Lublin, Poland*

**Oksana Serhieienkova,**

*Borys Grinchenko Kyiv University, Ukraine*

**Tetiana Yablonska,**

*Taras Shevchenko National University of Kyiv, Ukraine*

## **Abstract**

The article analyzes the peculiarities of personal self-improvement in early and late adolescence. The age, individual psychological and gender characteristics of adolescents influencing their real and ideal self-images, the directions of desired changes and self-improvement motivation are revealed. The peculiarities of self-improvement of girls and boys are characterized; self-improvement tendencies during the specified age periods are analyzed. The process of personal self-improvement has distinct individual-psychological colors, which is determined primarily by the peculiarities of personal characteristics, self-awareness and motivations.

**Keywords:** *self-improvement, self-development, self-knowledge, ideal self, real self.*

## **Introduction**

Researching on personal self-improvement is important nowadays because a person's ability of constant development and self-improvement is really essential under the conditions of social changes. Studies of self-improvement are particularly important for adolescence when biological, psychological and social maturation of an individual takes place (Craig, 1996). As for psychological aspects, the formation of a personality is essentially associated with the formation of such basic psychological constructs as values and a worldview, interests and motives, self-image (Boryshevskyi, 2012; Serdiuk, 2015). Adolescents begin to think about their own individual peculiarities, ways of further development and professionalization, which stimulates their desire to improve their physical parameters, improve their skills, competences, develop certain personal traits. At the same time, there are also negative trends among adolescents and young people – deviant behaviour, different types of dependencies. Therefore, the research on peculiarities and motivation for self-improvement of adolescents will help to find methods of psychological assistance for their development, as well as means of psychological correction in case of developmental deviations.

**Research object:** the process of personal self-improvement.

**Research subject:** age, individual-psychological and gender characteristics of self-improvement in early and late adolescence.

**Aim of the research:** to identify the peculiarities of self-improvement in early and late adolescence, to reveal the main tendencies and dynamics of this process.

### Literature Review

The studies of personal self-improvement are presented rather marginally in psychological science, due to the complexity of the phenomenon, lack of developed theoretical foundations and methodical tools for such studies. Self-improvement is studied in the context of personal moral development (Boryshevskiy, 2012) and an actor's self-development (Kuzikova, 2012). In addition, self-improvement is understood as a process of conscious development guided by a person him/herself, when certain qualities and abilities are formed and developed for benefits of the person's subjective goals and interests. Self-improvement is connected with the comprehension of a personal ideal and corresponding formation of an ideal self-image, inducing personal self-changes (Boryshevskiy, 2012; Yerakhtorina, 2013). The mental mechanisms of human self-consciousness, leading motives prompting personal self-improvement, as well as processes ensuring its effectiveness (self-control, self-evaluation, and self-organization) are placed in the center of attention. The research on the age aspects of self-improvement is associated with the research on the features of educational environment (Goleń & Tylka, 2012).

The issue of personal self-improvement is inter-crossed with many other issues of psychology, in particular, with the issues of personal self-determination and self-efficacy. Consequently, in line with the theory of self-determination (Ryan & Deci, 2000), self-improvement is understood as a holistic, self-determined, complex phenomenon mediated by a large set of personal characteristics, in particular a value of self-development, an integrity of life path perception, self-acceptance, faith in oneself, readiness for self-changes, etc. The issue of self-improvement is also associated with a person's quality of life (Zimny, 2000); some aspects of it are studied together with personal self-efficacy: as a person's ability to master the necessary behavioral responses in neo-behaviorism (Urdu, 2006); as the ability to manage one's own development and activities in order to effectively achieve one's own goals within the competent approach (Tokar, 2013).

Self-knowledge, self-projection, self-education, self-cultivation, self-actualization are distinguished in the structure of self-improvement (Yerakhtorina, 2013, Kalashnykova & Ivanova, 2013). Personal self-improvement begins from self-knowledge, unique real and ideal self-images are formed as a result. The person's awareness of his/her imperfections and his/her desire to get closer to his/her own ideal becomes an impetus for self-improvement; at this point, the person must set a goal and outline a specific plan for achieving it. The main activities for the put-forward goal implementation are self-education and self-cultivation, here new knowledge and skills are gained, new qualities are developed with the help of special methods and tools of work on oneself (Kalashnykova & Ivanova, 2013). The final element of self-improvement is self-control and self-correction, when a person determines whether his/her goal has been achieved, outlines new objectives of his/her own development, or corrects those goals and objectives that have not been achieved.

### Research approach

Given the structural principle of personal development, which means the existence of internal and external factors of personal development during ontogeny (Craig, 1996), we, nevertheless, have focused our study on internal psychological factors, since they are the leading ones at adolescence. Consequently, one of the basic methodological approaches to the research was the theory of self-determination (Ryan & Deci, 2000), since the ability of self-improvement can be implemented when an individual becomes a real actor, that is, the driving forces of personal development are localized in the person him/herself, and external factors lose their programmatic role (Serdiuk, 2015). The research was also based on the idea that awareness of the discrepancy between real Self and ideal Self can become an impetus for self-improvement (Boryshevskiy, 2012; Yerakhtorina, 2013, Kalashnykova & Ivanova, 2013).

**Research participants:** the research involved secondary school students of Kiev, who studied the eighth year (51 people with average age of 13.2 years, 26 girls and 25 boys) and the tenth year (75 people with average age of 15.7 years; 39 girls and 36 boys).

**Research method:** in order to study the age and individual-psychological characteristics of self-improvement we used Leary's Interpersonal Behavior Circle (Leary, 2004) modified by Sobchuk (Sobchuk, 2001), the technique of "Dispositional characteristics of self-improvement (DCSI)" (Kuzikova, 2012), methods of mathematical statistics (Pearson criterion, Student's criterion).

Leary's Interpersonal Behavior Circle in Sobchuk's (2001) modification is widely used as a tool for psychological diagnosis; it has shown its effectiveness in particular for diagnostics of real and ideal self-images as integral parts of a holistic Self. Moderate (non-conflicting) differences between real and ideal self-images are considered as a prerequisite for further personal development and self-improvement. The proposed modification differs from the original Leary's Circle mainly concerning the interpretations of obtained results: here, the types determined by Leary are examined within the theory of personal leading tendencies and the individual-typological approach, developed on the theoretical basis; the modification has high validity and reliability (Sobchuk, 2001). In particular, the discrepancy between real Self and ideal Self was taken into account, which, in the case of a slight difference (<4 points), stimulates development, self-improvement, but if it is more significant, it is considered as an indicator of a low self-esteem (Sobchuk, 2001).

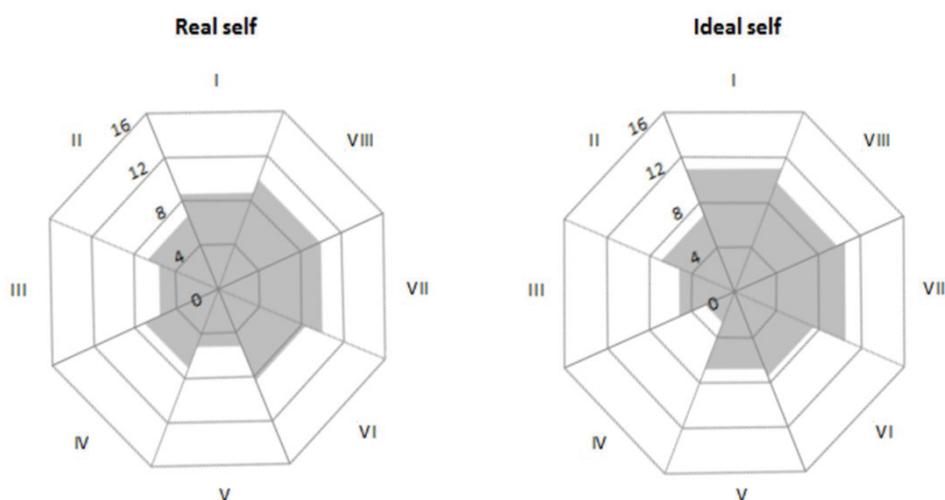
The technique of "Dispositional characteristics of self-improvement (DCSI)" identifies the following parameters: 1) the need for self-development, self-improvement, manifested in the openness and interest in the entourage, in one's own inner world and other people, aspiration for personal growth; 2) formation of conditions for self-development, including autonomy, positive self-perception, maturity of self, determined goals, active life strategies, tolerance to novelties; 3) formation of self-development mechanisms, including self-knowledge, self-analysis, awareness of differences between real and ideal self-images, sensitivity to feedback, self-regulation (Kuzikova, 2012). The author has performed the standardization and validation of the method with a sample of Ukrainian students; the determined self-improvement indicators are measured in steps and have the same weighting coefficient.

### Research results

The performed empirical research has identified individual-psychological characteristics in the light of their mirroring in real and ideal self-images of the respondents; the gap between real self and ideal self motivates self-improvement, it creates the main content of self-

improvement and forms psychological conditions necessary for successful implementation of the self-improvement process.

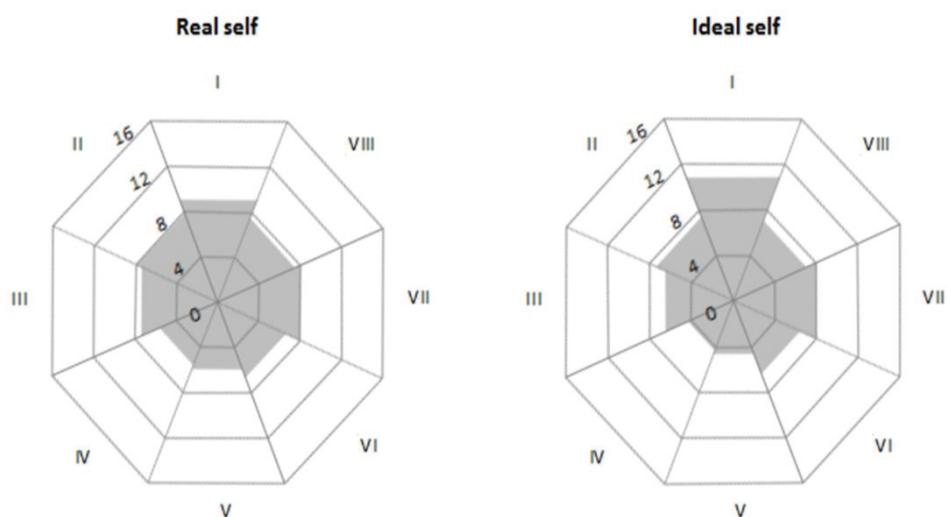
First, let us examine the peculiarities of self-improvement in early adolescence. As evidenced by the data presented in Fig. 1 and 2, the boys-early adolescents are characterized by quite pronounced domination, energy, confidence (“Imperious-Leading” type). These features of the girls are mitigated by a more pronounced propensity to cooperation, flexibility in conflict situations, conformity, sociability, their desire to earn recognition and love from others. The girls also more often express altruistic trends, such as responsibility, delicacy, desire to help, they often are focused on others than on themselves (“Responsible-Generous” and “Cooperative-Conventional” types). Girls can be basically described as conformative, well-conducted and at the same time quite critical.



**Fig. 1.** Correspondence of real and ideal self-images of girls in early adolescence (according to Leary’s Circle in Sobchuk’s modification, n=26)

I – Imperious-Leading, II – Independent-Dominant, III – *Straight-Aggressive*, IV – *Distrustful-Skeptical*, V – *Humble-Shy*, VI – *Dependent-Obedient*, VII – *Cooperative-Conventional*, VIII – *Responsible-Generous*.

The boys in early adolescence are more focused on themselves, prone to rivalry; they are critical, often experience difficulty in contacts, tend to show negativism in a form of verbal aggression. In comparison with the girls, they show lower values for the scales: “Humble-Shy”, “Dependent-Obedient”, “Cooperative-Conventional” and “Responsible-Generous” and higher values for the scales “Independent-Dominant” and “Imperious-Leading” (Fig. 2).

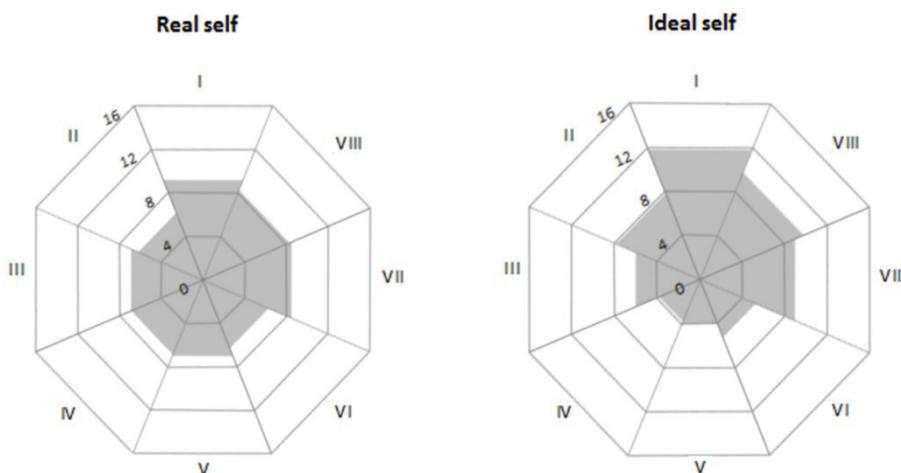


**Fig. 2.** Correspondence of real and ideal self-images of boys in early adolescence (according to Leary's Circle in Sobchuk's modification, n=25)

*I – Imperious-Leading, II – Independent-Dominant, III – Straight-Aggressive, IV – Distrustful-Skeptical, V – Humble-Shy, VI – Dependent-Obedient, VII – Cooperative-Conventional, VIII – Responsible-Generous.*

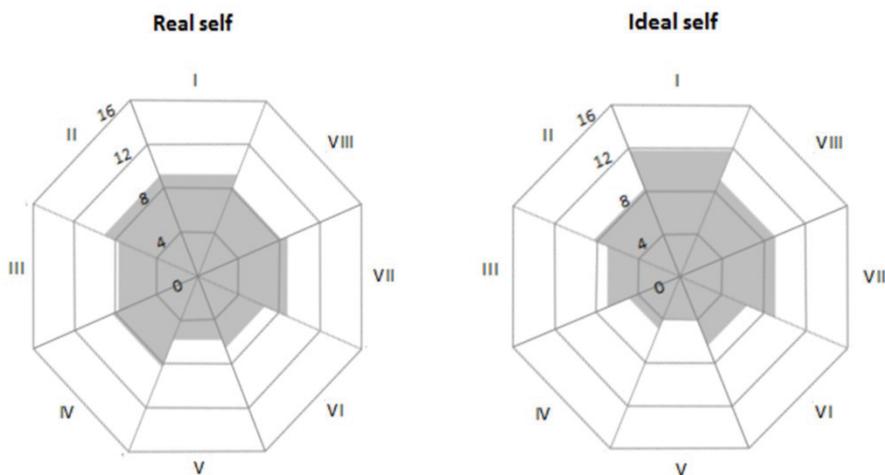
As shown in Figures 1 and 2, the direction and scope of self-transformations desired by the boys and girls in early adolescence are very similar: they tend to develop their dominance, leadership, self-confidence (the “Imperious-Leading” type) more and reduce submissive signs. Differences between real self and ideal self of the boys and girls are determined as trends. Significant gender differences have been found regarding the differences between real and ideal self-images for the “Distrustful-Skeptical” scale (by Student t-test,  $p=0.01$ ), the girls show a higher desire to reduce their criticism. Opposite trends have been recorded for the “Humble-Shy” scale: while the girls tend to develop corresponding qualities, the boys, on the contrary, ideally want to be far less modest and humble than they estimate themselves in real life ( $p=0.1$ ).

The results of the testing of girls and boys in late adolescence are given respectively in Fig. 3 and 4.



**Fig. 3.** Correspondence of real and ideal self-images of girls in late adolescence (according to Leary’s Circle in Sobchuk’s modification, n=39)

I – Imperious-Leading, II – Independent-Dominant, III – Straight-Aggressive, IV – Distrustful-Skeptical, V – Humble-Shy, VI – Dependent-Obedient, VII – Cooperative-Conventional, VIII – Responsible-Generous.



**Fig. 4.** Correspondence of real and ideal self-images of boys in late adolescence (according to Leary’s Circle in Sobchuk’s modification, n=36)

I – Imperious-Leading, II – Independent-Dominant, III – Straight-Aggressive, IV – Distrustful-Skeptical, V – Humble-Shy, VI – Dependent-Obedient, VII – Cooperative-Conventional, VIII – Responsible-Generous.

Fig. 3 and 4 show clearly that self-images of early and late adolescents are different as for the most important characteristics, and as for the areas where the respondents want to improve themselves. In particular, the girls in late adolescence, compared with the girls in early adolescence, show less friendliness and altruism and their general direction of desired changes is associated with the growth of individualism, orientation on self (the “Independent-Dominant” type), dominance and leadership (the “Imperious-Leading” type) and with a significant decrease of their criticality and subordination. In addition, it is desirable for the girls to increase responsibility towards others (the “Responsible-Generous” type).

The most significant difference has been recorded for the “Humble-Shy” scale: these traits (modesty, shyness, humility) are less desirable for girls in late adolescence than for girls-early adolescents, and this difference is the most significant ( $p=0.005$ ). Another significant difference between girls in late and early adolescence has been found for the “Dependent-Obedient” scale in the description of real self-images ( $p=0.01$ ). This means that the girls-early adolescents understand themselves as much more dependent on their entourage, they seek support and recognition, but the girls in late adolescence feel more autonomous.

The boys in late adolescence, in comparison with the early adolescent boys, show some increase in their altruistic and critical characteristics. However, they are less satisfied with themselves in comparison with early adolescents and their desired changes are focused on the growth of dominance, leadership, self-confidence (the “Imperious-Leading” type), and altruism and on lowering of manifestations of such characteristics as submission and criticism toward their entourage (the “Humble-Shy” and “Distrustful-Skeptical” types). Real self-images of the boys in late adolescence manifest more expressively the characteristics of “Distrustful-Skeptical” type compared with those in early adolescence ( $p=0.01$ ) and their conscious desire to improve these characteristics: there is a significant difference for these characteristics between real self and ideal self ( $p=0.05$ ). There are also significant differences between the boys in early and late adolescence as for their ideal self-images for the “Responsible-Generous” type, indicating the expressed desire of boys in late adolescence to develop their responsibility, altruism ( $p=0.01$ ).

In general, we can say that both girls and boys with age accept themselves less; the gap between real and ideal self-images increases, as is clearly shown in Table 1.

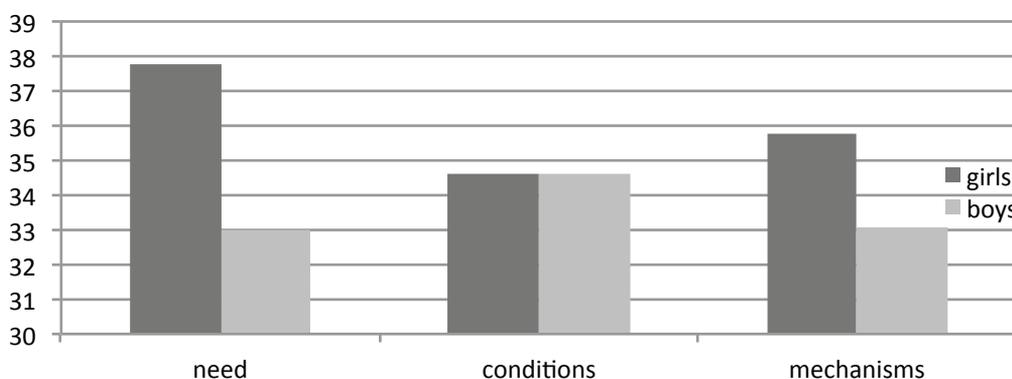
**Table 1.** The average absolute difference between real and ideal self-images in early and late adolescence

Age	Gender	n	Difference between real self and ideal self	Standard deviation	Standard error of average	T-criterion and significance
Early adolescence	Girls	26	7.73	4,468	0,876	$t=-4.11$
	Boys	25	3.24	2,818	0,564	$p<0.001$
Late adolescence	Girls	39	8.08	6,343	1,016	$t=-2.26$
	Boys	36	5.08	4,976	0,829	$p<0.05$

The above data show clearly that the difference between ideal and real self-images is significantly higher for the girls than for the boys; and these differences are higher in early adolescence ( $p\leq 0.001$ ). In late adolescence, the difference between boys’ ideal and real self-images changes to a greater extent (from 3.24 to 5.08) than that of the girls (from 7.73 to

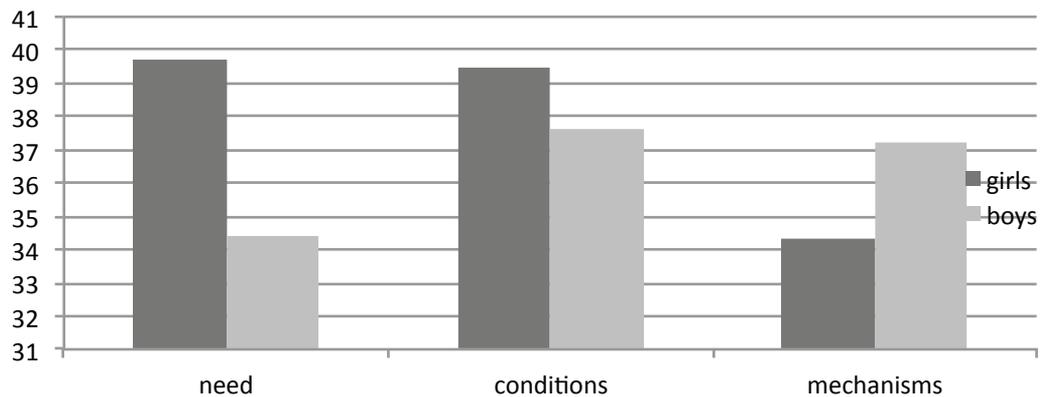
8.08), hence gender differences for this indicator decrease at late adolescence ( $p \leq 0.05$ ), and the differences between the boys in early and late adolescence are statistically significant ( $t = -1.67$ ,  $p \leq 0.1$ ). This testifies the existence of a distinct age-connected tendency for a greater awareness in late adolescence of one's own individual psychological peculiarities and the desire to build purposefully one's own Self in accordance with one's own ideal self-images. The girls earlier than the boys understand their own characteristics, they start reflecting on their self-improvement in early adolescence.

These results correspond to the data obtained with the technique of "Dispositional characteristics of self-improvement (DCSI)" (Kuzikova, 2012). According to the research results, the girls-early adolescents think more often about self-development and self-improvement, they show a greater inclination to self-improvement. They are characterized by average levels of autonomy, positive self-perception, maturity of self, determined goals, active life strategies, tolerance to novelties, which create together the conditions for self-improvement, and the girls have more formed self-improvement mechanisms (self-knowledge, self-analysis). The boys-early adolescents are characterized by less need for self-improvement ( $p \leq 0.005$ ) and worse formation of its mechanisms (at the level of trends) (Fig. 5).



**Fig. 5.** Characteristics of self-improvement in early adolescence by Kuzikova's technique of "Dispositional characteristics of self-improvement (DCSI)" (n=51)

In late adolescence, the need for self-improvement grows and the corresponding mechanisms are formed; these mechanisms include self-knowledge, self-analysis, and awareness of the differences between real and ideal self-images (but differences are not significant). Formation of autonomy, positive self-perception, determined goals, active life strategies, tolerance to novelties, as conditions for self-improvement are more pronounced in this age compared with early adolescence ( $p \leq 0.005$ ). At the same time, the girls demonstrate a higher level of self-improvement ( $p \leq 0.005$ ), and the boys are characterized by better formation of the processes acting as mechanisms of self-improvement (at the level of trends) (Fig. 6).



**Fig. 6.** Characteristics of self-improvement in late adolescence by Kuzikova's technique of "Dispositional characteristics of self-improvement (DCSI)" (n=75)

Table 1, as well as diagrams 5 and 6, shows that girls in early and late adolescence are characterized by higher motivation for self-improvement and by a more significant difference between the real and ideal self-images than the boys.

The analyzed correlations show the existence of links between indicators of real self and the need for self-improvement, formation of self-improvement conditions and mechanisms (correlations between real and ideal self-images have not been examined, since they indicated self-satisfaction, absence of aspiration of self-changes). It has been discovered that the need for self-improvement correlates most closely with the features of "Cooperative-Conventional" ( $r=0.648$ ) and "Humble-Shy" ( $r=-0.714$ ) types for the girls in early adolescence. Consequently, those girls in early adolescence who are cooperative, flexible, sociable, friendly are prone to self-improvement; and the girls who show passivity, complacency, and tendency to obey are least inclined to it. As for boys in early adolescence, it has been found out that the "Independent-Dominant" type is associated with formed conditions for self-improvement ( $r=0.790$ ) and its mechanisms ( $r=0.705$ ). Consequently, confident and purposeful early adolescents without selfish features are characterized by autonomy and a higher level of self-knowledge, which contributes to their self-improvement.

The need for self-improvement of the girls in late adolescence correlates negatively with the features of the "Straight-Aggressive" type ( $r=-0.521$ ); the girls with pronounced manifestations of aggressiveness are also not inclined to self-development. As for the boys in late adolescence, the expressed "Imperious-Leading" type presented in real self-images correlates with the conditions of self-improvement ( $r=0.649$ ), and the "Independent-Dominant" type, characterized by egocentrism, orientation on oneself, correlates negatively with self-improvement mechanisms ( $r=-0.730$ ). Consequently, the boys in late adolescence characterized by self-confidence, leadership qualities, but without expressed egoistic features are more goal-directed and active, which contributes to their self-improvement.

### Discussion

Some research results confirm the data of previous studies on the importance of personal development at adolescence (Boryshevskiy, 2012; Craig, 1996), the part of which is self-improvement as goal-oriented self-changes. The data obtained partly confirm the fact

that individuals with independent and aggressive traits rarely show dissatisfaction with their character or interpersonal relationships (Sobchuk, 2001), and, accordingly, are less prone to self-improvement. These data are in line with the researches confirming that the formation and development of boys' self-images in the ontogenetic aspect are somewhat slowed down compared to those of girls (Pantyleev, 1991). As Craig notes, many girls form disadvantaged self-images during adolescence, they have relatively low expectations and less confidence in their abilities than boys (Craig, 2000), which is largely attributed to the gender stereotyped education (Kikinezhdi, 2011).

At the same time, new data have been obtained that reveal how adolescents' certain individual and psychological traits, as well as the correlation between real self and ideal self are related to motivation for self-improvement and formation of its conditions and mechanisms, therefore, the characteristics of people prone to self-improvement and the ones who are not prone to it are specified. The new tendencies that have been proven and highlighted are important for the development of psychological assisting programs for adolescents, as well as preventive measures and psychological correction of negative trends in adolescents' personal development.

### Conclusion

1. The performed research confirms that early adolescence and especially late adolescence are characterized by the intensification of personal self-improvement, which is manifested in the growth of self-knowledge, awareness of existing differences between real and ideal self-images, and this knowledge motivates self-improvement. The desires to gain autonomy, to develop leadership qualities, and to be altruistic show significant age dynamics from early to late adolescence.
2. The process of personal self-improvement has distinct individual-psychological colors, determined primarily by the peculiarities of personal character, self-awareness and motivations. Certain individual and psychological peculiarities of adolescents associated with self-improvement have been specified; characteristics of adolescents who are more inclined to self-improvement have been determined.
3. Significant gender differences with regard to self-improvement have been revealed. Girls in early and late adolescence are characterized by higher motivation for self-improvement; they show a more significant difference between their real and ideal self-images in comparison with boys, which stimulates them to change themselves. It encourages girls to change, although their low self-esteem can hinder effective self-improvement. These differences are likely to be related to faster personal "maturing" of girls and education based on gender stereotypes, but this requires a separate study.

### References

- Boryshevskiy, M. I. (2012) Samotvorennia osobystosti: sotsialno-psykholohichna sutnist, determinanty stanovlennia ta rozvytku [Personality's Self-creation: Social-psychological Essence, Determinants of Becoming and Development]. *Problemy zagalnoyi ta pedagogichnoyi psihologiyi [Problems of General and Pedagogical Psychology]*, 14, 1, 28-35.
- Craig, G. (1996). *Human development (7<sup>th</sup> ed.)*. Upper Saddle River, NJ: Prentice Hall.
- Goleń, J. & Tylka M. (2012) Oddziaływanie obecności rodziców w wychowaniu na aspiracje rodzinne i społeczne młodzieży [The Effect of Parents' Presence in the Process of Upbringing on Family and

- Social Aspirations of Young People]. *Roczniki nauk o rodzinie i pracy socjalnej [Annals of family sciences and social work]*, 4(59), 129-144.
- Kalashnykova, L. M. & Ivanova O. I. (2013) Samovdoskonalennia yak osoblyvyi vyd diialnosti osobystosti [Self-perfection as a Special Type of Activity of Personality]. *Pedagogika i psihologiya [Pedagogic and Psychology]*, 43,73-82.
- Kikinezhdi, O. M. (2011) *Genderna identychnist' v ontogenezi osobystosti [Gender Identity in Ontogenesis of Personality]*. Ternopil': Educational book. Bogdan.
- Kuzikova, S. B. (2012) *Psykhologichni osnovy stanovlennia subiekta samorozvytku v yunatskomu vitsi [Psychological Bases of Subject's Becoming in Self-development in Young Age]*. Sumy: Printing House "McDen".
- Leary, T. (2004) *Interpersonal Diagnosis of Personality. A Functional Theory and Methodology for Personality Evaluation*. A division of Wipf and Stock Publishers.
- Pantyleev, S. R. (1991). *Samootnoshenie kak emocyonalno-ocenochnaya sistema [Self-Relationship as an Emotional-evaluation System]*. Moscow: Publisher Moscow State University.
- Ryan, R. M. & Deci, E. L. (2000) Self-determination theory and the facilitation of intrinsic motivation, social development and well-being. *American psychologist*, 55(1), 68-78. <https://doi.org/10.1037//0003-066x.55.1.68>
- Serdiuk, L. Z. (Ed.) (2015). *Psykhologo-pedahohichni osnovy protsesu samotvorennia osobystosti: monohrafiia [Psychological and pedagogical bases of the process of self-personification: monograph]*. Kyiv, Pedagogical thought.
- Sobchuk, L. N. (2001) *Vvedeniye v psyhologiyu individualnosti. Teoriya i praktika psyhodiagnostiki [Introduction to the Psychology of Individuality. Theory and Practice of Psychodiagnostics]*. Moscow: Institute of Applied Psychology.
- Tokar, J. (2013) *Samodoskonalenie menedżerów: rozwój kompetencji przywódczych [Self-improvement of Managers: Development of Leadership Competencies]*. Warszawa: Difin.
- Urđan, T. (2006) Self-efficacy beliefs of adolescents / T. Urđan, F. Pajares. Information Age Publishing, Greenwich.
- Yerakhtorina, O. M. (2013). *Samovdoskonalennia osobystosti u naukovii refleksii i realizatsii biohrafichnykh proektiv [Self-improvement of Personality in a Scientific Reflection and Realization of Biographic Projects]*. Kharkiv: Ivanchenko' Printing House.
- Zimny, Z. M. (2000) *Jakość rozwoju osobowości człowieka a jakość jego życia. Jakość rozwoju a jakość życia. [The Quality of Human Personality Development and the Quality of Human Life. Quality of Development and Quality of Life]*. Częstochowa: Wyd. WSP.

## PECULIARITIES OF PERSONAL SELF-IMPROVEMENT IN EARLY AND LATE ADOLESCENCE

### *Summary*

*Julia Gorbaniuk, The John Paul II Catholic University of Lublin, Poland*

*Oksana Serhieienkova, Borys Grinchenko Kyiv University, Ukraine*

*Tetiana Yablonska, Taras Shevchenko National University of Kyiv, Ukraine*

The article analyzes the peculiarities of personal self-improvement in early and late adolescence. The **object of the research** is in the process of personal self-improvement. The **subject of the research** is age, gender and individual-psychological peculiarities of self-improvement in early and late adolescence. The **aim of the research** is to study the peculiarities of personal self-improvement in these age periods.

Self-improvement is understood as a conscious process, guided by a person him/herself for purposeful formation and development of personal qualities and abilities. This process is associated with understanding of a personal ideal and the corresponding formation of an ideal self-image, inducing personal self-changes. The main factors of self-improvement in early and late adolescence are motivation, peculiarities of character and self-consciousness, in particular, such its structural components as real and ideal self-images, influencing the content of this process, determining the main vector and individual strategies for its implementation.

The performed research has determined the specifics of age, gender and individual psychological peculiarities of self-improvement of early and late adolescents, in particular the content of their real and ideal self-images, the direction of the desired changes and its relations with self-improvement motivation and formation of self-improvement mechanisms. It has been empirically discovered that in early adolescence and especially in late adolescence, awareness of the difference between real and ideal self-images increases, this is associated with the development of self-awareness, the need for personal self-determination, and motivates adolescents for self-improvement. The process of self-improvement stimulates, first of all, those characteristics, which the respondents want to get rid of, or the characteristics they wish to develop in themselves. The process of personal self-improvement has distinct individual and psychological colors: adolescents characterized by self-confidence, propensity to cooperation, flexibility, sociability, and friendliness in relation to others are the most motivated for self-improvement. Gender differences in the self-improvement content and motivation has been revealed: girls in early and late adolescence are characterized by a more significant difference between real and ideal self-images than boys, which stimulates girls to change themselves.

**Corresponding author's email:** [julia.gorbaniuk@kul.lublin.pl](mailto:julia.gorbaniuk@kul.lublin.pl)