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#### INTERACTION OF PRESENTATIONS ABOUT THE PERSONALITY TRAITS AND SELF-ASSESSMENT OF SUCCESS

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#### *Abstract*

The study objectives were: 1) the comparison of the actual and ideal self-image with the life satisfaction (LS) and with the self-assessment of success in professional activity and in life in general; 2) the analysis of the desirable changes in the personality traits of respondents and their co-twins. Survey sample – 136 members of female monozygotic twin pairs aged 18-46 years. The self-image as well as the desirable changes of personality traits were diagnosed by semantic differential method, LS – with the SWLS (E.Diener), a success self-assessment – using Dembo's scales on which the respondents marked their place among the other people. It was shown that there are some age-related changes of an ideal self-image, connected, first of all, with the increasing attractiveness of some negative personality characteristics. The research subjects estimate themselves as more disturbing and less attractive to people as well as less persistent and avoiding conflicts than their brothers and sisters. There were identified five generalized factors: Goodwill; Insecurity; Perseverance; Authoritativeness; Emotionality. Insecurity demonstrated the closest relationship with the life satisfaction. The greater life satisfaction corresponds as well the desire to have less Goodwill and less Perseverance. The direction of the own desirable changes and of the co-twin ones are identical, except for Authoritativeness. The respondents themselves want do not to be afraid of conflict situations, to be able to insist on their own. They would like to see their co-twin more gentle and compliant. The study confirms the hypothesis of the adaptive nature of negative personality characteristics.

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**Keywords:** Personality traits, Semantic differential, Twins, Changes, Self-image, life satisfaction.



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## 1. Introduction

In recent decades has increased the interest in psychological characteristics which traditionally belonged to negative personal traits. If earlier they were used practically only in the context of studying the sources of antisocial behavior, then by the present time in addition to the traits associated with the tendency to violation of social norms (impulsiveness, nonclinical psychopathy and etc.) is distinguished the second group of traits connected with an exaggeration of value and inviolability of social norms (authoritarianism, conservatism, pathological perfectionism etc.).

## 2. Problem Statement

The unambiguous attitude towards the negative personal qualities is impossible due to the fact that they are positively correlated with subjective psychological well-being and in a certain measure perform a protective function when interacting with the outside world in potentially stressful situations (Brandt et al., 2015; Chertkova, 2017). So, for example, conservatism (Schlenker et al., 2012; Van Hiel & Brebels, 2011; MacInnis et al., 2013), authoritarianism (Sibley & Duckitt, 2008; Van Hiel & De Clercq, 2009) narcissism (Rose & Campbell, 2004) and etc. are associated with higher life satisfaction.

The perception about an ideal self-image are an important psychological component of the personality (Baumeister, 1998; Higgins, 1989) and the discrepancy between the real and ideal self-image plays an important motivating function (Boldero & Francis, 1999; Boyatzis & Akrivou, 2006). The self-esteem is significant not only for personal, but also for cognitive characteristics, influencing both the success of the activity (Ackerman et al., 2011), and the quantity of resources which we are ready to spend for achievement of the goal as well (Haimovitz et al., 2011).

## 3. Research Questions

It seems interesting to consider the perception of the attractiveness of various psychological properties (both positive, and negative personal traits) in everyday consciousness both concerning the own personality, and concerning the personality of people with whom there is a close contact, taking into account the self-assessment of success in life.

## 4. Purpose of the Study

The study considers the subjective value of various personality traits and the vector of changes: what properties are desirable in the respondents' opinion? How much do they need to change in this case? Do the ideal images of self and co-twin coincide? How are they connected with the life satisfaction? It is supposed that the negative personal characteristics have an adaptive character.

## 5. Research Methods

### 5.1. Subjects

The survey sample includes 136 members of female monozygotic twin pairs aged from 18 up to 46 years. Monozygotic twins are genetically identical and, as shown in a large number of behaviour genetics studies, (Riemann et al., 1997; Loehlin & Nichols, 2012; Polderman et al., 2015) they show a considerable

similarity in their personality traits. So it is more interesting to compare the assessments of self and co-twin, as well as their ideal images.

The selection of women only for this part of the study had a compelled character. Women are much more loyal to the idea of participating in the study and, respectively, their quantity in the general survey sample is disproportionately high. Since the gender differences are observed for a number of personality traits only female couples were selected from the general survey sample to ensure the purity of the data and the absence of the influence of these differences on the analysis results. At the same time, since the experimental work is continued and the survey sample is expanding, a similar analysis based on male couples can be expected, with the subsequent comparison of the results of two studies.

## 5.2. Methods

In the study was used the method of the semantic differential. A list of 45 adjectives was worked out in the earlier study. Respondents were offered to estimate the expressiveness of each feature on the five-point Likert scale, where 1 corresponded to the answer: this property "is completely uncharacteristic" for me, and 5 – the property is "very characteristic" for me. The research subjects filled out forms of semantic differential four times in a row. For the first time they were offered to answer, to what extent the personality traits are characteristic for them at the moment. In the second – to think about, what I would like to change in myself, and to describe the desirable self-image with the help of the same adjectives. For the third time they assessed their co-twin by the same properties at the moment and for the fourth time – the image of an ideal co-twin.

This formulation of the experiment allows solving a number of problems – to receive a perception about "Me-real" and "Me-ideal", to correlate the self-esteem and mutual esteem of members in the pair, and to assess the similarity of twins according to personal traits, etc.

The assessment of life satisfaction was performed with the help of "Satisfaction with Life Scale," SWLS (Diener et al., 1985). E. Diener's questionnaire includes 5 statements aimed at assessment by the research subjects the quality of their lives in general in relation to a certain ideal:

- 1) In general my life is close to what I consider ideal.
- 2) I have excellent conditions for life.
- 3) I am satisfied with the life.
- 4) Today I have succeeded in everything that is important in life.
- 5) If I could live my life all over again, I would change almost nothing.

In this case the investigator doesn't set to the respondent the criteria for success, so the assessment has maximally subjective and maximally generalized character. It can serve as an indicator of adaptation and the general psychological well-being of the subject.

In addition to the general satisfaction with life the respondents were offered to mark on a horizontal scale from 1 to 10 with a step 1 their success in professional activity and in life in general. The left edge (score 1) corresponds to complete failure, and the right edge (score 10) – the feeling that you are the best of all. Statistical processing included the correlation analysis, the factor analysis, and comparison of groups taking into account the Student's t-test.

## 6. Findings

### 6.1. Subjective attractiveness of particular personal traits.

The majority of respondents consider as unambiguously positive the following qualities (the ideal image has an average score above 4): characteristics of self-control (persistence, industriousness, diligence, purposefulness, strong will, activity, patience), a positive emotional background (self-confidence, optimism, ease), orientation on others (pleasantness in communication, goodwill, sensitivity, sympathy to others, responsiveness, sensitivity). The least attractive to respondents (score from 1 to 2) is the inability to rely on a person (unreliability, falsity, uncontrollability), negative emotionality (irritability, frustration, fearfulness, indecisiveness), trouble in communication (limitation, suspiciousness, rancor, conflictiness, grumpiness, impudence, despotism). The authoritativeness and distrust give rise to an ambivalent attitude (the average score of an “ideal person” is close to 3). Probably, it is supposed that the most adaptive is the moderate expressiveness of these characteristics.

The perception of the desired self-image varies a little when a person becomes older – five of 45 characteristics have shown significant correlations with age of the research subjects. It is interesting that first of all the negative personality traits become more attractive – conflictiness ( $r=0.284$ ,  $p<0.001$ ), rancor ( $r=0.228$ ,  $p<0.01$ ), soreness ( $r=0.176$ ,  $p<0.05$ ). At the same time, respondents would like to become less thrusting ( $r=0.266$ ,  $p<0.01$ ) and more optimistical ( $r=0.181$ ,  $p<0.05$ ). It can be assumed that the older respondents have the life experience, which demonstrates that the more effective is not the wish to be attractive to people, but the ability to defend one's interests.

### 6.2. Personal traits of a higher level

An exploratory factor analysis was used for the transition to the level of more generalized psychological characteristics (principal components analysis, rotation of varimax). Five factors have been emphasized which describe about 47% of dispersion in total. Results of the factor analysis are presented in Table 1.

**Table 01.** The five-factor structure of personality traits, emphasized on the basis of the semantic differential in our study

Adjectives	Factor 1	Factor 2	Factor 3	Factor 4	Factor 5
Sympathizing	0.774				
Thoughtful	0.721				
Responsive	0.706				
Delicate	0.658				
Kindly	0.633				
Pleasant	0.500				
Indifferent	-0.427				
Conscientious	0.427				
Self-confident		-0.761			
Indecisive		0.682			
Disappointed		0.661			
Pleasant to people		-0.600			
Active		-0.565			
Sensitive		0.539			

Thrusting		-0.537			
Fearful		0.534			
Mistrustful		0.508			
Suspicious		0.507			
Hardworking			0.760		
Persistent			0.700		
Diligent			0.672		
Thoughtless			-0.661		
Purposeful			0.634		
Unreliable			-0.524		
Practical			0.465		
Untruthful			-0.437		
Conflictive				0.694	
Possessive				0.652	
Uncontrollable				0.637	
Despotic				0.606	
Impudent				0.469	
Strong-willed				0.451	
Emotional					0.733
Impressionable					0.660
Tender-hearted					0.598
Dreamy					0.452
% of dispersion	14.3	11.6	8.6	7.6	4.2

The Factor 1 – “Goodwill” – includes the following adjectives – Sympathizing, Thoughtful, Responsive, Delicate, Kindly, Pleasant, Indifferent (with the negative meaning), Conscientious, and explains 14.3% of basic data dispersion.

The Factor 2 – “Insecurity, passivity” – compose the adjectives Self-confident (with the negative meaning), Indecisive, Disappointed, Pleasant to people (with the negative meaning), Active (with the negative meaning), Sensitive, Thrusting (with the negative meaning), Fearful, Mistrustful, Suspicious, it explains 11.6% of dispersion.

The Factor 3 – “Perseverance, consciousness” – includes the adjectives Hardworking, Persistent, Diligent, Thoughtless (with the negative meaning), Purposeful, Unreliable (with the negative meaning), Practical, Untruthful (with the negative meaning), explaining 8.6% of dispersion.

The Factor 4 – “Authoritativeness, proneness to conflict” – compose the adjectives Conflictive, Possessive, Uncontrollable, Despotic, Impudent, Strong-willed (7.6% of dispersion).

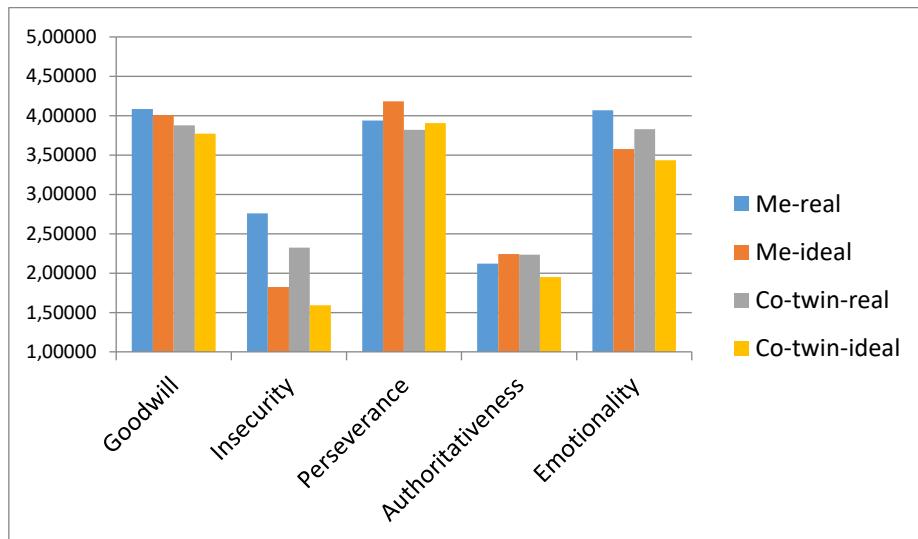
The Factor 5 – “Emotionality” – includes the adjectives Emotional, Impressionable, Tender-hearted, Dreamy and explains 4.2% of basic data dispersion.

The received structure partially intercrosses the classical Big Five, however it has a number of differences, in particular, the absence of the cognitive component relating to Openness to new experience.

### **6.3. The actual self-image and the co-twin image, and the ideal images**

The Figure 1 submits the data of five received factors for all four answers of the respondents. The assessments of self and co-twin are similar: both members of the pair are considered as benevolent, conscious, emotional. They have self-confidence above an average and low authoritativeness. The only

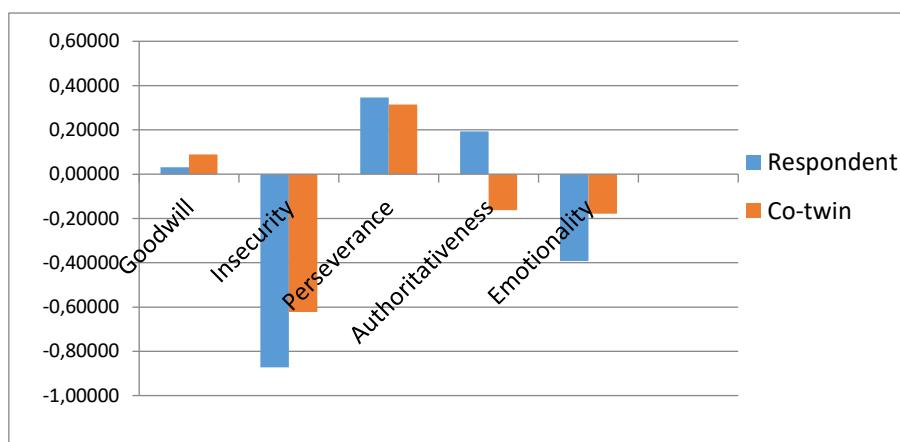
factor on which there are significant differences in assessments is the lack of self-confidence. The respondents see themselves more passive and uncertain, than their co-twins (2.76 vs 1.82, p<0.01).



**Figure 01.** The expression of five generalized personal traits: self-assessment and assessment of the co-twin at the present time and the desired changes

#### 6.4. Presentations about the desirable changes in personal traits in members of twin pairs

The Figure 2 represents the direction of the own desirable changes and the desirable changes of co-twin on the generalized personal characteristics. For each factor was calculated the difference between the assessment of properties at the present time and an ideal image. Thus, a positive delta demonstrates that respondents would like to see this property more expressed, than it is now, and a negative one – about the desire to soften/reduce this property.



**Figure 02.** Own desirable changes and the desirable changes of co-twin

The main thing that should be changed both in themselves and in the co-twins, according to our respondents, is to increase the self-confidence. It would be good to be a little more responsible and more persistent. To have the stronger nerves (less sensitivity), as it seems to the twins, also will be useful in life.

The goodwill, in fact, doesn't require changes – the participants of the study consider that they are already pleasant in communication and ready to help and to sympathize people.

The most interesting fact is the attitude towards the authoritativeness. The desirable directions of changes are different for themselves and for the co-twin. The respondents themselves wish not to be afraid of conflict situations, be able to insist on their own, even to add a little impudence for themselves. They would like a co-twin to be more gentle, compliant than now (0.19 vs -0.16, p<0.001).

#### 6.5. Self-image and life satisfaction

Table 2 presents Spearman's correlation coefficients between the self-estimations and the estimations of the own desired image and indices of life satisfaction. The closest relationship (with the negative meaning) with life satisfaction demonstrated the Factor 2 – Insecurity, passivity. The bigger life satisfaction corresponds also the desire to have less Goodwill and less Perseverance, consciousness.

**Table 02.** Interrelations of the generalized personality traits and indicators of life success.

	Life satisfaction	Professional success	Success in life
<b>Me-real</b>			
Goodwill	-0.09	0.08	-0.04
Insecurity, passivity	-0.35***	-0.22**	-0.27***
Perseverance, consciousness	0.08	0.32***	0.11
Authoritativeness, proneness to conflict	-0.07	0.05	0.19**
Emotionality	-0.29	-0.07	-0.06
<b>Me-ideal</b>			
Goodwill	-0.23**	-0.05	-0.09
Insecurity, passivity	-0.06	0.08	-0.11
Perseverance, consciousness	-0.17*	0.03	-0.10
Authoritativeness, proneness to conflict	-0.08	-0.11	0.08
Emotionality	-0.06	0.06	0.08

For assessment of the success in professional activity and life in general by the research subject is significant only the actual self-image, but not the ideal presentations. The self-confidence and activity is important for life satisfaction as well. In addition, self-regulation skills, perseverance, conscientiousness are important for feeling successful in the profession, and for the general success in life are important the ability to defend one's interests (authoritativeness and conflictiness).

## 7. Conclusion

Thus, the differences in the self-image and the twin image concern the sphere of the emotional relations with other people, including the potentially conflict situations. The research subjects seem to themselves less attractive to others, more resentful and fearful, incapable to insist on their own, than their brother/sister, and the desirable changes are related to the correction of these distinctions.

The most part of negative personal characteristics is estimated by the respondents more likely negatively, but some of them (for example, distrustfulness and authoritativeness) are considered as

adaptively useful under the condition of moderate expressiveness. The self-assured and active people have a greater life satisfaction and subjective feeling of success. At the same time a complex of characteristics connected with the absence of shyness and the desire to avoid conflict, the ability to defend own interests for success in life turned to be important for success in life. In general, the study confirms the hypothesis of the adaptive nature of negative personal characteristics.

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