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Life-Sense Orientations in Adolescence and Early Adulthood

Tatiana Sakharova *

*Moscow State Pedagogical University, Pedagogy and Psychology Department,
Maliy Sukharevsky st. 6 Moscow 127053 Russia*

Abstract

The most widespread professional opinion holds that an individual's value-sense orientations, by determining his or her predominant viewpoint, influence the direction and content of the individual's participation in society, general attitude towards the world and one's self, give meaning and direction to a person's actions, and shape behavior throughout his or her entire life. This article examines the formation of life-sense orientations in ontogenesis, as well as their content and transformation from adolescence to early adulthood. We gave special consideration to the peculiarities of the individual's life-sense orientations with regard to the gender factor .

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1. Introduction

1.1 *Life-sense orientations as a complex dynamic system*

Life-sense orientations, like life purpose, constitute a complex system, which has its own hierarchy and is subject to change. This system is comprised of both minor, “peripheral” meanings and the main, “core” life purpose, which determines an individual's position when he or she is faced with a choice [1]. Core life purpose is expressed in different circumstances, helps an individual to maintain integrity and allows to build his or her

* Corresponding author. Tel.: +7-903-103-28-07.

E-mail address: sakharova@mail.ru

personal hierarchical system. This system does not only include minor meanings, but also the main, central life purpose, the very core that helps a person evaluate different periods and situations from his or her past life [2].

The view of life-sense orientations as a complex dynamic system is based on the fact that an individual's ontogenesis implies moving from one age benchmark to the next, as opposed to staying stagnant. As a result, a person's ideas of self, others, and the world as a whole change, and his/her life-sense orientations and worldview change accordingly [3].

1.2 Adolescence as the first stage of life when life-sense orientations begin to form

Adolescence is one of the first stages in the life of an individual when it becomes possible to talk about the formation of a hierarchy of life-sense orientations. In early adulthood, following adolescence, the process of establishing a person's life-sense sphere is finalized. The importance of these two life stages in forming an individual's life-sense sphere is the subject of our study.

1.3 Individual identity development goals in adolescence and early adulthood

For the purposes of our empirical research into life-sense orientations of individuals, we established the following relevant age groups: adolescence, 12-17 years old, and early adulthood, 18-23 years old. Isolating these exact age groups was based on the different development goals associated with these ages.

Prof. H. Renschmidt separates the following individual development goals in adolescence: accepting one's physical appearance, adopting either female or male role and specific features of gender behavior; establishing new (as they relate to the previous period of time) relationships with the reference group; gaining emotional independence from one's parents and other important adults; developing vocational direction; establishing first relationships with the opposite sex; forming socially responsible behavior; developing a system of values and ethical awareness as a reference point for one's behavior [4]. Prof. Renschmidt opines that for an individual, it is critically analyzing values of his/her surroundings that leads to forming an independent value system.

O.V. Khukhlaeva distinguishes other, substantively different goals of individual development in early adulthood: establishing personal identity (social, professional, ethical, family, religious, cultural, etc.); achieving social maturity, which is characterized by desire and ability to take responsibility for one's life [5]. Erik Erikson examined personality development at each life stage as a possibility to achieve one of the two opposites; for adolescence, he identifies these two opposites as identity vs. confusion, and for early adulthood as intimacy vs. isolation – thus, he emphasizes the difference in development goals that a person strives to achieve at different ages [6].

1.3.1 Desire to form personal identity as a goal of personality development during adolescence

However, an individual starts forming his or her own personal identity as early as in adolescence. As L.I. Bozhovich points out, the need for identity is an important new formation for high school students. This need includes establishing a sense system, which incorporates an individual's understanding of the world and of one's self, as well as the search for one's life purpose [7].

I.V. Dubrovina, while agreeing with L.I. Bozhovich, emphasizes that in adolescence it is not identity that emerges, but rather psychological readiness for it. She defines "psychological readiness" as forming stable, consciously developed understanding of one's own rights and obligations, responsibility, ethical norms and convictions – i.e., defined psychological mechanisms and models that in the future would allow the individual to lead a responsible, active life [8]. Consequently, we may state that the need for identity appears in adolescence and should fully take shape in young adulthood.

1.3.2 Value-sense nature of self-identity

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