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The Correlation between Self-image and the Image of a Mentor among Students in the Context of Professional Self-determination

Daria A. Krasilo

Moscow State University of Psychology & Education, Moscow, Russia
ORCID: <https://orcid.org/0000-0003-3759-7560>, e-mail: krasilo@list.ru

Xenia Yu. Repesciuc

Moscow State University of Psychology & Education, Moscow, Russia
ORCID: <https://orcid.org/0009-0005-5898-852X>, e-mail: fylata_92@mail.ru

The research focuses on clarifying the concept of the image of the Self as a subject of professional self-determination and its functions in the educational and professional activities of psychology students. The article presents empirical data obtained from a sample of 76 psychology students, including students of the 1st and 2nd years (N=45) and students of the 3rd and 4th years of Taras Shevchenko National University of Tiraspol (N=31). The following methods were used in the study: a test questionnaire of the orienting image of the mentor "OSON" D.A. Krasilo, aimed at identifying the type of mentor, the method Self-Assessment-25 by V.N. Kunitsyna, motivation of professional activity (K. Zamfir's method modified by A.A. Rean), the method Value Orientations by M. Rokich. In order to identify the correlation between the self-image and the mentor image of the actor of professional self-determination, statistical data analysis methods were used: the Spearman pair correlation method, the non-parametric Mann-Whitney U-test and methods of cluster data analysis in IBM SPSS Statistics 27. The types of self-image of the subject of professional self-determination are identified as "idealized" and "realistic-effective" in the 1st and 2nd year students; "reflective" and "career-oriented" in the 3rd 4th year students.

Keywords: the image of the Self; image of a Mentor; professional self-determining; motivation; value orientations; self-esteem; the period of entering adulthood.

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Взаимосвязь образа-Я и образа Наставника у студентов в контексте профессионального самоопределения

Красило Д.А.

ФГБОУ ВО «Московский государственный психолого-педагогический университет»
(ФГБОУ ВО МГППУ), г. Москва, Российская Федерация
ORCID: <https://orcid.org/0000-0003-3759-7560>, e-mail: krasiloda@mgppu.ru

Репещук К.Ю.

ФГБОУ ВО «Московский государственный психолого-педагогический университет»
(ФГБОУ ВО МГППУ), г. Москва, Российская Федерация
ORCID: <https://orcid.org/0009-0005-5898-852X>, e-mail: fylata_92@mail.ru

Представлены результаты исследования, направленного на выявление и уточнение связи образа-Я и образа Наставника у субъекта профессионального самоопределения в период вхождения во взрослость. Материалы получены в эмпирическом исследовании на выборке из 76 студентов-психологов 1—2 курсов (N=45) и 3—4 курсов (N=31) ПГУ им. Т.Г. Шевченко г. Тирасполь. В работе использовались следующие методики: опросник субъективного образа наставника «ОСОН» Д.А. Красило, методика «Самооценка-25» В.Н. Куницыной, методика К. Замфир в модификации А.А. Реана, методика «Ценностные ориентации» М. Рокича. С целью выявления характера взаимосвязи образа-Я и образа Наставника у субъекта профессионального самоопределения были использованы методы статистического анализа данных: метод парной корреляции Спирмена, непараметрический U-критерий Манна-Уитни и методы кластерного анализа данных в IBM SPSS Statistics 27. Авторами выделены типы образа-Я субъекта профессионального самоопределения: «идеализированный» и «реалистично-действенный» на 1—2 курсах; «рефлексивный» и «карьерно-ориентированный» на 3—4 курсах.

Ключевые слова: образ-Я; образ Наставника; профессиональное самоопределение; мотивация; ценностные ориентации; самооценка; период вхождения во взрослость.

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Introduction

A number of Russian and international researchers in the field of developmental psychology [10; 15; 19; 21; 24] suggest

that student life (ages 18—25) is a critical period for professional self-determination. During this time, often referred to as “entering adulthood” [6] or “emerging adulthood”

[12], young people make key decisions about their career paths, typically setting the stage for the next decade. Consequently, it is crucial for contemporary research to examine the correlation between various factors influencing development during these years, such as perceptions of a profession, self-perception within a profession, relevant personal and professional attributes, and mentor relationships.

Professional self-determination for students often stems from a value-based and ideological standpoint that is not yet fully mature. Individuals navigating this process must achieve stability and comprehensive development during this transitional phase (ages 18-25) as well as the subsequent stable period of youth (ages 20-30). Based on experience working with high school students facing challenges in professional self-determination, it is reasonable to assert that what they experience is more of a preliminary, idealized version of the genuine self-determination that awaits them upon entering adulthood. Self-image during this phase remains fragile and dynamic, often characterized by youthful idealism, and requires support from the social environment.

In summary, professional self-determination during the transition to adulthood involves reevaluating youthful perceptions of a profession, taking initial steps toward career self-realization, establishing real professional connections, and developing essential professional qualities and skills. The connection between this process and the development of self-image in professional self-determination is particularly noteworthy [18].

In Pridnestrovie, young people face unique challenges in professional self-determination due to an unstable and complex economic landscape. The demand for specific professions may not

align with current trends, making it difficult to gain a preliminary understanding of the professional world. In this context, parents frequently serve as mentors, providing essential support to those navigating career decisions. When choosing a university, many applicants rely on idealized notions of a profession or uncritically accept the authoritarian opinions of others, often their parents. This can lead to the formation of a “foreclosed professional identity” (D. Marcia, L.B. Schneider), which may result in heightened emotional tension, internal conflict, disappointment in their chosen field, diminished motivation for university studies, a compromised value system, and low self-esteem [1]. Consequently, students frequently drop out before completing their second or third year.

Therefore, this research aims to explore the correlation between self-image and mentor figures in professional self-determination, while also shedding light on the specific characteristics and challenges faced by students during the transition to adulthood.

In his work *The Problem of Age*, L.S. Vygotsky suggested that the period of ages 18—25 should be viewed as the beginning of adult development rather than the conclusion of childhood [3]. Similarly, D. Super’s concept of professional development emphasizes the “exploration” stage (ages 15—24). During this phase, young people explore various professional roles, attempting to integrate their goals, values, inclinations, and opportunities.

Numerous international researchers, such as E. Erikson, D. Levinson, R. Gould, G. Vaillant, and J. Arnett, have highlighted the unique characteristics of this period, associating it with personal and professional self-determination, the pursuit of mentors and a sense of belonging in so-

ciety, and the development of ideals and values. J. Arnett, for instance, describes ages 18–25 as a transitional phase of “emerging adulthood” [22], when general guidelines for adult development are just beginning to take shape. D. Levinson also identifies a comparable period (ages 18–22) as a transitional stage between adolescence and the relative stability of young adulthood.

This article adopts the age periodization model proposed by D. Levinson, who outlined four developmental tasks that individuals must accomplish to attain adulthood and navigate the “entering adulthood” crisis. These tasks include aligning youthful aspirations with reality, finding a mentor, laying the groundwork for a career, and forming close relationships. Mentors play a crucial role not only in supporting young people and guiding them toward their dreams but also in fostering professional self-determination, career advancement, and facilitating a more mature relationship dynamic with parents [23].

Within the context of professional self-determination, self-image and the guiding influence of a mentor are interconnected and dynamic components in the social development of individuals entering adulthood. Both components will be examined in more detail.

Self-image of the Actor of Professional Self-Determination and its Components

In mastering a professional activity, the individual becomes an actor of professional self-determination, with Self-image at its core [16; 18]. Self-image develops through contradictions between motive and goal, conflicts among motives, and discrepancies between the real and ideal Self, as well as through existing opportunities, con-

ditions, and prospects. This development reflects the individual’s active evaluation of themselves as a professional and their personal selection of a profession as an environment for growth and development. By aligning the professional positions of the real and ideal Self, the direction of personality development within the professional environment is determined. Notably, Self-image develops primarily through professional training — the central activity during emerging adulthood (ages 18–25) — which is understood as a shared activity with a significant adult, a Mentor [3; 4].

As a dynamic psychological construct, Self-image undergoes transformation, increasing in complexity and individualization. It evolves not only in terms of knowledge, experience, and professional competencies but also in values, motives, emotions, and subjective experiences.

An analysis of conceptual models suggests that the professional Self-image consists of several structural components. At its foundation lies the individual’s goal-motivational complex, shaped by their value orientations and professional motivation. First explored by S.D. Smirnov, this complex includes value orientations, which define the goals and means of activity, and professional motivation, which encompasses the internal incentives that drive, direct, and regulate work activity and professional relationships. Crucially, individual and social values are integrated within the individual’s value system [25].

Modern students develop their value orientations amid significant social transformations, uncertain societal attitudes and norms, and dynamic cultural values and ideals, including professional guidelines [8]. This study draws on M. Rokeach’s concept of professional self-realization values — active and productive life, interesting work,

public recognition, and professional development — as a framework for examining student value orientations during professional self-determination.

The goal-motivational complex also includes (as proposed by K. Zamfir) a three-component structure of professional motivation: internal, external positive, and external negative. Internal motivation involves high job-search activity, a desire for self-improvement, and strong self-regulation. It is associated with an individual's genuine and objectified needs, expressed as sincere interest in their professional activity. External motivation, in contrast, arises from factors beyond the individual and the professional activity itself. External positive motivation includes incentives for which the individual exerts effort, perceived as a "reward." External negative motivation consists of punishments, criticism, and condemnation, where the individual engages in an activity primarily to avoid negative emotions or consequences.

The connection between individual activity and life plan implementation is reflected in self-assessment of professionally significant personal qualities. This includes a sense of personal significance, self-confidence, the ability to assess one's capabilities accurately, and reflection on oneself within social interactions. Self-esteem in professional self-determination relates to knowledge, skills, and abilities, and their development [12], involving an assessment of one's intellectual and personal qualities compared to the ideal of the "Professional Self."

Thus, this study adopts a working model of professional Self-image based on three key parameters: self-assessment of professionally important qualities, motivation for professional activity, and values of professional self-realization.

Mentor Image in the Context of Professional Self-Determination and its Components

The image of a Mentor serves as a catalyst for an individual's professional self-determination, facilitating the maturing individual's orientation in constructing a professional career and developing a coherent value-worldview.

In accordance with L.S. Vygotsky's cultural-historical theory, the developing child relies on ideal forms of action discovered in adults through joint activity. O.A. Karabanova integrated Vygotsky's view on the interaction of ideal and real forms in ontogenesis with P.Y. Galperin's concept of the functional development of orienting activity, clarifying the role of the "orienting image of a significant other" in age-specific psychological development and its importance in individual activity planning and regulation (Karabanova, 2004). D.A. Krasilo (2010, 2012) has shown that during emerging adulthood (18-25 years), the Mentor functions as a significant other, perceived as "the same adult" and actorily accepted as a model of adulthood. In the context of professional self-determination, this model is a professional Mentor — an individual embodying "ideal forms" of professionally and personally significant qualities, competencies, and coping mechanisms. This article employs D.A. Krasilo's four-part model of the Mentor image: 1) ideal mentor (e.g., a character from a movie or book); 2) real mentor from the family (parent or another family member); 3) real mentor outside the family (friend, significant adult, teacher, coach, etc.); and 4) internal mentor (independence, self-reliance).

In the development of Self-image and the Mentor image in professional self-determination, two of the four main spheres of real self-determination were selected:

the formation of a preliminary career basis (hereafter, the career sphere) and the development of a stable value-ideological position (hereafter, the worldview sphere). These spheres are represented by two separate scales of the SIMI inventory: “Mentor in a Career” and “Mentor in a Worldview” (Krasilo, 2010, 2012).

This article reports the results from the first stage of a cross-sectional study conducted on junior and senior students. The primary objective of this stage was to establish and elucidate the relationship between Self-image and the Mentor image in professional self-determination during emerging adulthood. The analysis of these results has informed the goals and objectives of the second stage, which combines cross-sectional and longitudinal methods on a larger sample and is currently in progress, focusing on the dynamics of Self-image development in relation to the Mentor image among psychology students.

Objectives and Hypotheses

The objectives of the first stage of this study were:

1. To determine the relationship between the structural components of Self-image and Mentor image within the career and worldview domains in psychology students at PSU.

2. To identify differences in the expression of Self-image and Mentor image parameters across various career and worldview categories among junior (1st-2nd year) and senior (3rd-4th year) university students.

3. To elucidate specific relationships between structural components of the Self-image and the Mentor image within these categories, comparing junior with senior years.

The primary hypothesis of this study is:

A significant connection exists between parameters related to Self-image (self-assessment of professionally important personal qualities, professional activity motivation, and value orientations) and the expression of four types of Mentors (ideal, real from family, real outside family, and internal) in career and worldview domains among psychology students during emerging adulthood.

The subsequent specific hypotheses were:

1. Differences are expected in the expression of Self-image and Mentor image parameters across career and worldview domains between junior (1st-2nd year) and senior (3rd-4th year) students, with junior students demonstrating lower self-esteem regarding professionally valuable qualities (PVQs), a prevalence of external negative motivation for professional activity, less emphasis on the values “development” and “active productive life,” and a greater inclination towards the ideal Mentor type in both domains.

2. Students who exhibit more pronounced real mentors outside their family within their career domain’s Mentor image are predicted to have higher personal self-esteem, stronger internal motivation for professional activity, and prioritization of the values “development” and “productive life.”

Methods

The following methodologies were employed in this empirical research:

1. «SIMI» a subjective image of a mentor inventory of the mentor by D.A. Krasilo (D.A. Krasilo, 2010, 2012) — to assess the expression of four Mentor types (ideal, real from family, real outside family, internal) in career and worldview domains [5].

2. «Self-esteem-25» Method (V.N. Kunitsyna, 2001) — to assess self-

assessment of professionally important personal qualities in students [9].

3. «Motivation of Professional Activity» Method (K. Zamfir, modified by A.A. Rean, 2006) — to assess dominant motivation types for university study (internal positive, external positive, external negative) [2].

4. «Value Orientations» Method (M. Rokeach, 1973) — to assess the hierarchy of professional self-realization values (active productive life, interesting work, public recognition, productive life, development) [19].

Sample

The sample comprised 76 psychology students from T.G. Shevchenko PSU (Tiraspol): 45 first- and second-year students and 31 third- and fourth-year students.

Statistical Data Analysis

The following statistical methods were used:

1. Spearman's rank-order correlation to determine relationships between Self-image and Mentor image parameters.

2. Mann-Whitney U test to determine differences in Self-image and Mentor image indicators between first- and second-year and third- and fourth-year students.

3. Hierarchical agglomerative cluster analysis and K-means cluster analysis to identify patterns in the relationship between Self-image and Mentor image in both student groups.

Preliminary Findings

The average values of Mentor image parameters [7] were distributed as follows: “ideal mentors” in career and worldview domains exhibited the lowest values; “real mentors” (with “mentor from family” being dominant) showed average values; and “internal mentors” had the highest values. Senior students, compared to junior students, demonstrated significantly lower average values for “ideal” and “internal” mentors, slightly lower average values for “mentors from family,” but higher average values for “mentors outside family.” These data are presented in Table 1.

The parameters of self-assessment of professionally important qualities [7], as well as general self-assessment, measured using the “Self-Assessment-25” method by N.V. Kunitsyna in 1st-2nd and 3rd-4th year students, correspond to a high level, however, in 3rd-4th year students there is a clear tendency towards an increase in all of the above parameters (see Table 2).

Table 1

Average values of the parameters of Mentor image among students in 1st—2nd and 3rd—4th years

Parameters	1st—2nd year	3rd—4th year
Ideal Career Mentor	22,39	19,58
Ideal worldview mentor	18,89	16,38
Real career mentor from family	30,73	29,33
Real mentor from family in worldview	31,34	30,21
Real career mentor outside the family	25,11	26,25
Real mentor outside the family in worldview	25,43	26,42
Internal career mentor	44,41	42,92
Internal mentor in worldview	46,91	43,92

The indicators of professional motivation [7], expressed in average values, reveal a high level of internal and external positive motivation in both 1st-2nd and 3rd-4th year students. External negative motivation is expressed lower, and its average value is somewhat higher in 1st-2nd year students (see Table 3).

The hierarchy of values in professional self-realization among students was measured using a ranking procedure, with the most preferred value ranked first and the least preferred last. Analysis of average ranks in Table 4 indicates that for first- and second-year students, “development” is the top preference, followed by “interesting work” and “active life.” The values of least actorive importance are “productive life” and “public recognition.”

Among third- and fourth-year students, “development” also occupies the first posi-

tion in the hierarchy of professional self-realization values. Following in descending order are “active life,” “interesting work,” and “productive life.” “Public recognition” is the least preferred value, and its average rank is lower than that of first-year students. Notably, among senior students, compared with students in the initial years of study, the average ranks of the second and third positions are reversed. “Active life” occupies the second position. These observed differences may indicate shifts in the system of value orientations as students’ progress in their professional self-determination. Senior students place greater value on active personal involvement in their work, while social status and public recognition become less important.

Correlation analysis revealed significant relationships between individual Self-image parameters and the Mentor image

Table 2

Average values of self-assessment of professionally important qualities among students in 1st—2nd and 3rd—4th years

Parameters	Entrepreneurship	Social intelligence	Communicative competence	Social competence	General self-esteem
1st—2nd year	54,82	55,00	60,09	51,80	217,07
3rd—4th year	62,13	62,38	66,83	58,79	240,29

Table 3

Average values of professional motivation parameters for 1st—2nd and 3rd—4th year students

Parameters	Intrinsic motivation	External positive motivation	External negative motivation
1st—2nd year	4,41	3,99	3,32
3rd—4th year	4,52	3,99	2,96

Table 4

Average values of ranking of professional self-realization values for 1st—2nd and 3rd—4th year students

Parameters	Active life	Interesting work	Public recognition	Productive life	Development
1st—2nd year	9,45	8,11	12,64	10,20	6,91
3rd—4th year	8,88	9,04	14,08	10,00	7,67

within the sample of psychology students (first through fourth years). Specifically, negative correlations (Table 5) were found between the expression of the “ideal mentor in career” type in the Mentor image and student self-assessment across all components of professionally important personal qualities: initiative ($R = -0.329^{**}$, $p \leq 0.05$), social intelligence ($R = -0.374^{**}$, $p \leq 0.05$), communicative competence ($R = -0.252^{**}$, $p \leq 0.05$), social competence ($R = -0.519^{**}$, $p \leq 0.05$), and general self-esteem ($R = -0.383^{**}$, $p \leq 0.05$). Additionally, the “ideal mentor in worldview” parameter negatively correlates with self-assessment of social competence ($R = -0.236^*$, $p \leq 0.01$).

Direct significant relationships (Table 6) were found between the level of external negative motivation for professional activity and the expression of “ideal mentor” and “real mentor from family” types in the Mentor image, across both career and world-

view domains, respectively: “ideal mentor in worldview” ($R = 0.195^*$, $p \leq 0.01$), “ideal mentor in career” ($R = 0.233^*$, $p \leq 0.01$), “real mentor from family in worldview” ($R = 0.367^{**}$, $p \leq 0.05$), and “real mentor from family in career” ($R = 0.397^{**}$, $p \leq 0.05$). A significant positive relationship was also found between the level of internal motivation for professional activity and the expression of the “internal mentor in worldview” type in the Mentor image ($R = 0.233^*$, $p \leq 0.01$).

Let us examine the relationships identified within the sample between the third component of the Self-image of the actor of professional self-determination — the values of professional self-realization — and the Mentor image (Table 7). Negative correlations were found between the value of “active life” and the parameter “real mentor from family in worldview” ($R = -0.193^*$, $p \leq 0.01$), and between the value of “public recognition” and the parameters “real men-

Table 5

Correlation analysis results of self-assessment of professionally important qualities and mentor image among students (N=76)

Parameters	Enterprise	Social intelligence	Communicative competence	Social competence	General self esteem
Ideal mentor in worldview	-0.12	-0.162	-0.09	-0.236*	-0.137
Ideal mentor in career	-0.329**	-0.374**	-0.252**	-0.519**	-0.383**
Real mentor from family in worldview	-0.047	-0.053	-0.065	-0.129	-0.061
Real mentor from family in career	-0.058	-0.105	-0.05	-0.146	-0.082
Real mentor outside family in worldview	-0.084	-0.102	-0.035	-0.146	-0.088
Real mentor outside family in career	-0.108	-0.014	-0.003	-0.137	-0.037
Internal mentor in worldview	0.004	0.07	-0.035	0.009	-0.004
Internal mentor in career	0.01	0.108	0.013	0.01	0.036

Note: ** — Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (two-tailed); * — Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (two-tailed).

Table 6

Correlation analysis results of professional motivation and mentor image among students (N=76)

Parameters	Intrinsic motivation	External positive motivation	External negative motivation
Ideal mentor in worldview	-0,011	-0,076	,195*
Ideal mentor in career	-0,055	0,079	,233*
Real mentor from family in worldview	0,072	0,083	,367**
Real mentor from family in career	0,055	0,019	,397**
Real mentor outside family in worldview	-0,009	-0,114	0,014
Real mentor outside family in career	0,069	-0,042	-0,042
Internal mentor in worldview	,233*	0,155	-0,05
Internal mentor in career	0,126	-0,003	0,065

Note: ** — correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (two-tailed); * — correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (two-tailed).

Table 7

Correlation analysis results of professional self-realization values and mentor image among students (N=76)

Parameters	Active life	Interesting work	Public recognition	Productive life	Development
Ideal mentor in worldview	-0,1	-0,082	-0,08	-0,03	-0,167
Ideal mentor in career	-0,016	0,072	-0,156	-0,137	-,297**
Real mentor from family in worldview	-0,108	-0,062	-,252**	-0,151	-0,009
Real mentor from family in career	-,193*	-0,112	-,248*	-0,016	0,063
Real mentor outside family in worldview	-0,062	-0,011	-0,07	-,279**	0,094
Real mentor outside family in career development	-0,132	-0,035	-0,009	-0,185	0,111
Internal mentor in worldview	-0,125	0,008	0,084	-0,079	0,178
Internal mentor in career	-0,164	0,015	,290**	0,063	0,184

Note: ** — correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (two-tailed); * — correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (two-tailed).

tor from family in career” ($R = -0.252^{**}$, $p \leq 0.05$) and “real mentor from family in worldview” ($R = -0.248^*$, $p \leq 0.01$). Inverse significant relationships were also found: between the value of “development” and the parameter “ideal mentor in career” ($R = -0.297^{**}$, $p \leq 0.05$), and between the value of “productive life” and the parameter “real mentor outside the family in worldview”

($R = -0.279^{**}$, $p \leq 0.05$). A direct significant relationship was established between the value of “public recognition” and the parameter “internal mentor in career” ($R = 0.290^{**}$, $p \leq 0.05$).

The obtained results can be interpreted as follows.

Students whose Mentor image features a more pronounced “ideal mentor” in the

career domain tend to underestimate their professionally important personal qualities. Similarly, reliance on the “ideal mentor” in the worldview domain is associated with a lower level of social competence. For students with more pronounced ideal mentor types, as well as real mentors from within the family circle, the driving forces for mastering professional activity are incentives that function as coercion (criticism, punishment, fear of condemnation) and avoidance of potential adverse consequences.

Regarding the value orientations of students with a dominant ideal mentor type in their careers, they are less likely to prioritize the value of development in professional activity. The absence or weak reliance on real mentors outside the family environment is associated with a higher prioritization of the value of “productive life.” Conversely, a more pronounced reliance

on a significant person outside the family circle in the value-worldview position indicates a lower orientation toward productive professional activity.

The value of public recognition in the profession is more likely to be prioritized in students with a higher level of stability in their value-worldview position and independence of judgment, as clearly evidenced by the significant direct connection of this value with the internal mentor in the worldview domain. Interestingly, the prioritization of the values “active life” and “public recognition” is higher in students with a smaller proportion of real mentors from the family in both career and worldview domains. Conversely, students who are guided in building a career by their parents or other significant persons from the family environment prioritize the values “active life” and “public recognition” to a lesser extent.

Table 8

Comparative analysis of parameters of the self-image of the actor of professional self-determination in students of 1st—2nd and 3rd—4th years

№ п/п	Parameters of the self-image of the actor of professional self-determination	Average scores		Mann-Whitney U test statistics	Significance level of differences
		Junior courses (or lower years)	Senior courses (or upper years)		
1	Entrepreneurship	28,8	44,96	277	0,001
2	Social intelligence	29,47	43,73	306,5	0,004
3	Communicative competence	28,86	44,83	280	0,001
4	Social competence	30,53	41,77	353,5	0,025
5	General self-esteem	28,94	44,69	283,5	0,002
6	Intrinsic motivation	33,6	36,15	488,5	0,595
7	External positive motivation	35,52	32,63	483	0,56
8	External negative motivation	36,78	30,31	427,5	0,191
9	Active life	35,45	32,75	486	0,589
10	Interesting work	32,94	37,35	459,5	0,376
11	Public recognition	33,33	36,65	476,5	0,506
12	Productive life	34,53	34,44	526,5	0,985
13	Development	33,47	36,4	482,5	0,557

The Self-image of the actor of professional self-determination is a dynamic and evolving representation of its constituent components, changing as knowledge, ideas, and competencies within the profession develop. Therefore, the next task in this study was to compare the features of the Self-image of the actor of professional self-determination and its relationship with the Mentor image in junior (1st—2nd year) and senior (3rd—4th year) students using the Mann-Whitney U test.

Significant differences ($p < 0.005$) were found across all scales of self-assessment of professionally important personal qualities (Table 8). The average level of self-assessment of PVQs is lower for first- and second-year students (56%) compared to third- and fourth-year students (69%).

At the level of trends, differences are also apparent in the expression of other Self-image parameters. Junior students exhibit higher levels of external positive and external negative motivation for learning compared to senior students. Senior students, in addition to the significant differences in self-assessment of PVQs (demonstrating higher levels of initiative, communicative competence, social intelligence, and social competence), tend to exhibit higher levels of actorive importance for the values “interesting work” (44.58%), “public recognition” (45.68%), and “development” (46.85%).

No statistically significant differences were found in the expression of the main mentor types between junior and senior students. However, at the level of trends, it is notable that in both spheres of real self-determination (career and worldview), first- and second-year students generally exhibit the highest expression of the “ideal” and “internal” mentor types. Third- and

fourth-year students, on the other hand, are most pronounced in their orientation toward the “real mentor outside the family” type. This shift may be associated with the expansion of professional social contacts and separation from the parental family. If, in the initial years of study, professional choices are primarily based on a somewhat unrealistic ideal image or parental opinion, then senior students begin to focus on real professionals in their field. These results can be explained by the fact that as students progress through their professional training, acquiring theoretical and practical knowledge, they strengthen their self-confidence, increase self-esteem of professionally important qualities, and elevate the importance of professional self-realization values. This coincides with the emergence of external reference points — ideals in professional activity (real individuals — professionals whose image is correlated with specific practical skills, professional qualities, and achievements).

The analysis of these differences suggests examining the specifics of the relationship between the Self-image and the Mentor image in junior and senior students separately, using hierarchical cluster analysis (IBM SPSS Statistics 27). The dendrograms (Figures 1 and 2) reveal two clusters within the samples of both junior and senior students. To more precisely define these groupings, divisive clustering using the K-means method was employed. The structure of these clusters will be examined in more detail.

First-cluster students ($N = 12$) from the junior group are characterized by a higher representation of the ideal mentor in the career domain, along with low self-assessment scores for professionally important qualities. These char-

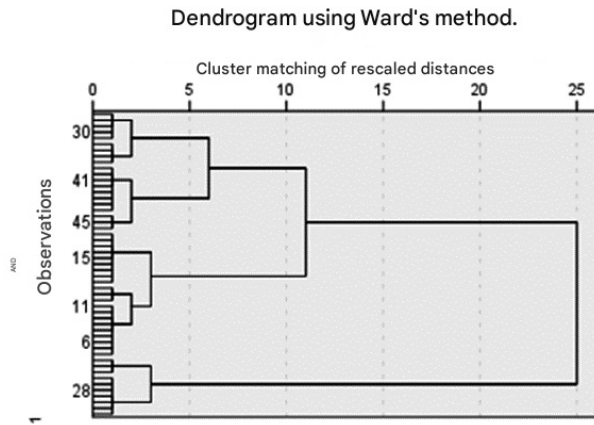


Fig. 1. Results of Ward's method hierarchical cluster analysis of data on all indicators of Self-image and Mentor image in 1st-2nd year students

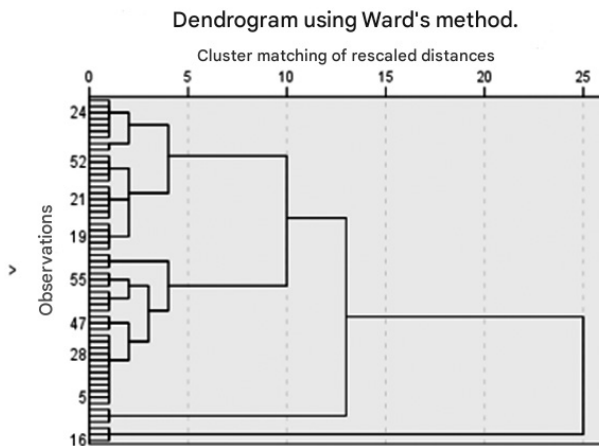


Fig. 2. Results of hierarchical cluster analysis by Ward's method of data on all indicators of Self-image and Mentor image in 3rd-4th year students

acteristics suggest classifying these respondents into a cluster of “Idealized Self-image of the Actor of Professional Self-Determination,” as they exhibit unrealistic ideas about their profession, prioritize the value of “active life,” and rely more heavily on an ideal image for professional mentorship. The second cluster (N = 31) comprises respondents

who demonstrate higher expression of the internal mentor in the worldview domain, high self-esteem of professionally important qualities, a higher level of external positive professional motivation, and, at the level of trends, greater prioritization of the values “productive life” and “public recognition.” These characteristics suggest classify-

ing these respondents into a cluster of “Realistic-Active Self-image of the Actor of Professional Self-Determination,” as these students demonstrate a desire for

active engagement in mastering their professional activity.

In the senior years, the empirical picture differs. As illustrated in the histo-

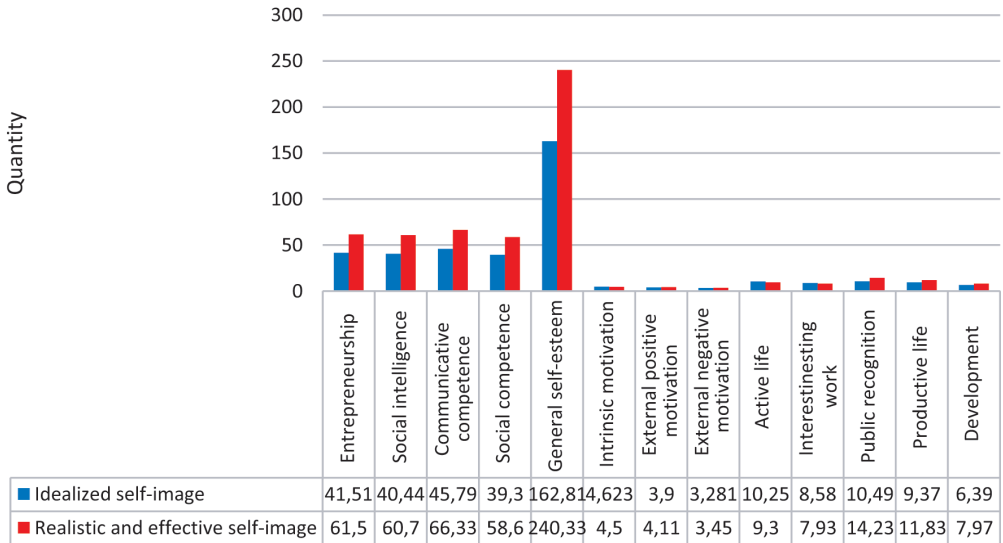


Fig. 3. Differences between identified clusters in indicators of the Self-image of the actor of professional self-determination in the sample of 1st-2nd year students (N=43)

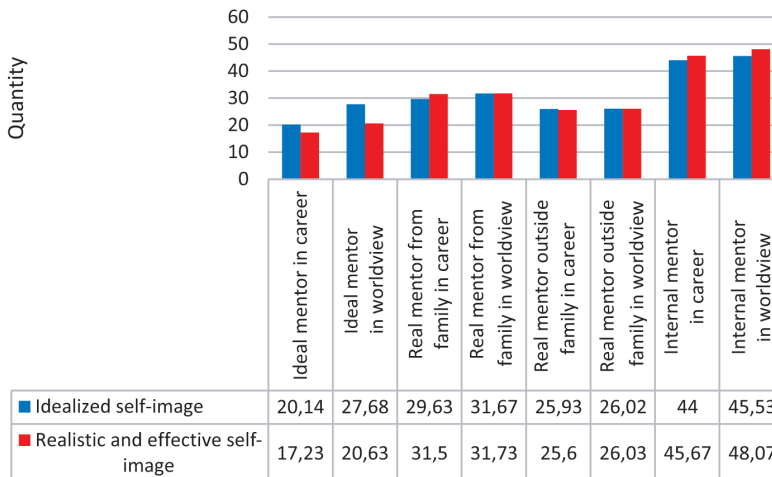


Fig. 4. Differences between the identified clusters in indicators of the Mentor image in the career and worldview spheres among 1st-2nd year students (N=43)

grams (Figures 5 and 6), which depict the cluster differences within the third- and fourth-year student sample, the first, “reflective” cluster (N = 19) is characterized by dominant variables of self-assessment of professionally important qualities and general self-esteem, along with the values of “active life” and “development.” These students prioritize self-development, a stable value-based worldview, and an active life. Their mentor image in the worldview domain demonstrates higher expression of the ideal and internal mentor types.

The second, “career-oriented” cluster (N = 12) is characterized by a predominance of the values “interesting work” and “productive life,” along with higher expression of the ideal mentor, the real mentor from family, and the internal mentor in the career domain (Figures 5 and 6). Compared to the “reflective” cluster, these students place greater actorive importance on three mentor types in the career domain: the ideal mentor, the real mentor from family, and the internal mentor. As shown in the histogram (Figure 6), the self-assessment of professionally important qualities in this cluster is somewhat below the average level, potentially reflecting a desire for a more realistic self-assessment. Their preference for the aforementioned professional self-realization values reflects an orientation toward respect for colleagues and the importance of interesting work and a productive life as avenues for realizing their personal potential.

Cluster analysis has clarified and specified the connections between Self-image and Mentor image parameters in students, contingent on their year of study (junior, first- and second-year students, and senior, third- and fourth-year students). Correlation analysis revealed that a more

pronounced “ideal mentor” in a student’s career domain Mentor image is associated with lower self-esteem of professionally important personal qualities and a higher level of external negative motivation for compelled learning. Cluster analysis clarified that this pattern is more characteristic of junior students. Among senior students, connections were found between the “real mentor outside the family” type and self-esteem of professionally important qualities, as well as internal and external positive motivation.

Thus, it can be argued that psychology students at the beginning of their professional training tend to rely on an ideal career mentor, which is associated with lower self-esteem of their own professionally important qualities and overall self-esteem, as well as negative motivation. Senior students predominantly select a professional outside the family as a mentor in both career and worldview domains, as they gain experience interacting with real representatives of their profession during their theoretical and practical training. By the end of professional training, “active life” becomes a highly prioritized value, alongside “development,” while “public recognition” decreases in significance. This shift may be associated not only with the peculiarities and patterns of professional self-determination but also with the fact that Pridnestrovian students, who typically occupy a more active life position and demonstrate a high level of internal professional motivation, are generally more oriented toward real interaction with mentors outside their family circle — teachers, senior colleagues, scientists, business professionals, etc. Furthermore, they often pursue further professional self-determination and career development in other countries, where opportunities are more abundant, the econo-

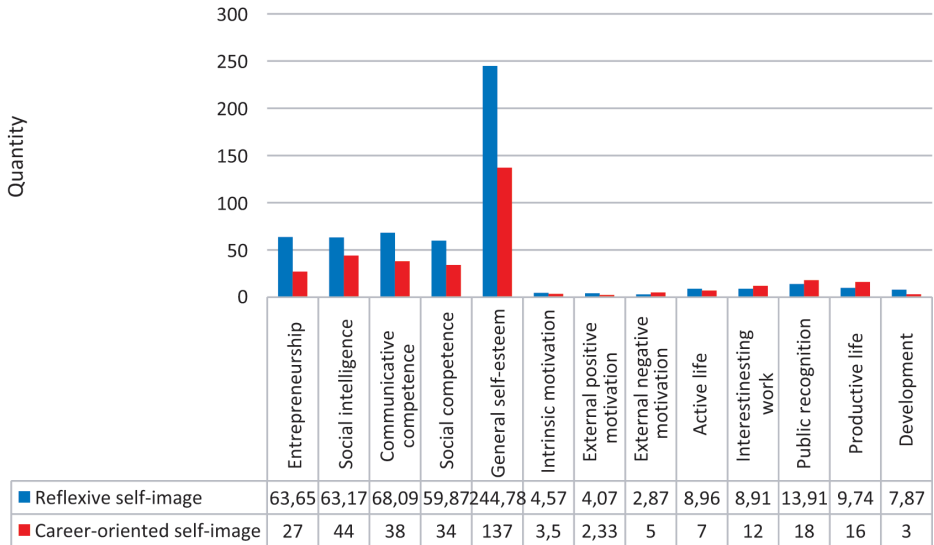


Fig. 5. Differences between identified clusters in indicators of Self-image as an actor of professional self-determination in the sample of 3rd-4th year students (N=33)

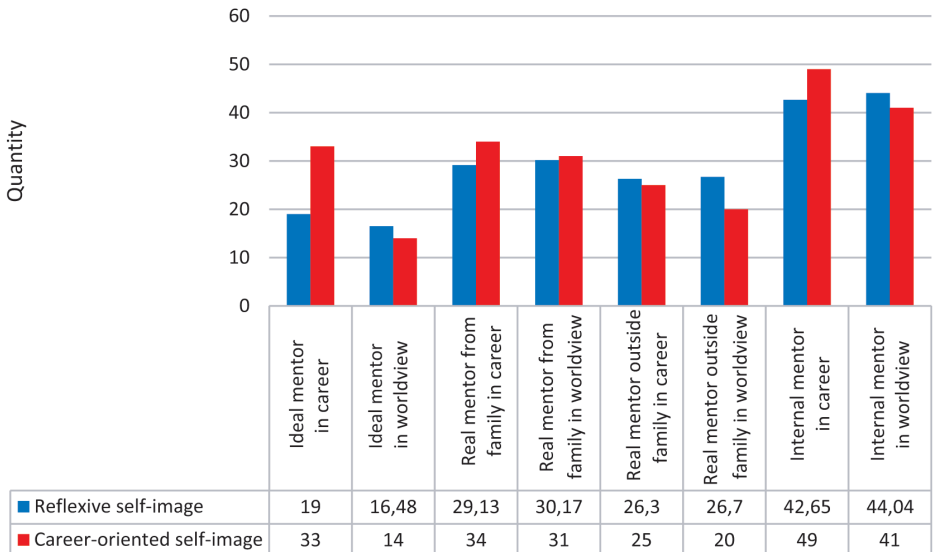


Fig. 6. Differences between identified clusters in indicators of the Mentor's image in the areas of career and worldview among 3rd-4th year students (N=33)

my is stronger, and the likelihood of achieving professional fulfillment is higher.

The obtained results suggest that the Self-image and the Mentor image are con-

nected in the actor of professional self-determination through complex relationships. The observed differences between junior and senior students' Self-image and Mentor image are likely influenced by the variability and asynchronous nature of professional self-determination and the achievement of personal maturity. However, the significant connections and differences, along with general trends, indicate an underlying logic and pattern in the process of professional self-determination, manifested in the dynamic interplay between the Mentor image and the Self-image.

Conclusion

1. The study, employing correlation and cluster analysis, investigated the relationship between Self-image parameters (specifically, self-assessment of professionally important personal qualities, motivation for professional activity, and value orientations) and Mentor image parameters in a sample of psychology students. The results revealed statistically significant relationships, supporting the main hypothesis: a connection exists between these Self-image parameters and the expression of four Mentor types (ideal, real from family, real from outside family, and internal) within the

career and worldview spheres of psychology students entering adulthood.

2. Significant differences in the Self-image among students of the 1st—2nd and 3rd-4th years were found in the parameters of self-assessment of professionally important personal qualities (self-assessment of PQC is higher among students of 3rd—4th years). For the remaining components of Self-image and Mentor image, no statistically significant differences were found between them (differences are observed only at the level of trends), which allows us to confirm the first partial hypothesis of the study regarding the presence of differences between students of the 1st—2nd and 3rd—4th years in Self-image as actors of professional self-determination.

3. The results obtained by cluster analysis and the identified differences between clusters in samples of the 1st—2nd and 3rd—4th year students allow us to confirm the second partial hypothesis that psychology students with more pronounced “real mentors outside the family” in Mentor image in the career sphere are characterized by a high level of self-assessment of PQC, a high level of internal motivation for professional activity, the priority of the values “development” and “productive life”.

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Information about the authors

Daria A. Krasilo, PhD in Psychology, Leading Research Associate, Associate Professor of the Department of Developmental Psychology L.F. Obukhova, Moscow State University of Psychology & Education, Moscow, Russia, ORCID: <https://orcid.org/0000-0003-3759-7560>, e-mail: krasiloda@ru

Xenia Yu. Repesciuc, PhD student of the Department of Developmental Psychology L.F. Obukhova, Moscow State University of Psychology & Education, Moscow, Russia; Lecturer at the Department of Psychology, Pridnestrovian State University after T.G. Shevchenko, Tiraspol, Pridnestrovian Moldavian Republic, ORCID: <https://orcid.org/0009-0005-5898-852X>, e-mail: fylata_92@mail.ru

Информация об авторах

Красило Дарья Александровна, кандидат психологических наук, доцент кафедры возрастной психологии имени профессора Л.Ф. Обуковой, ФГБОУ ВО «Московский государственный психолого-педагогический университет» (ФГБОУ ВО МГППУ), г. Москва, Российская Федерация, ORCID: <https://orcid.org/0000-0003-3759-7560>, e-mail: krasiloda@mgppu.ru

Репещук Ксения Юрьевна, аспирант кафедры возрастной психологии имени профессора Л.Ф. Обуковой, ФГБОУ ВО «Московский государственный психолого-педагогический университет» (ФГБОУ ВО МГППУ), г. Москва, Российская Федерация; преподаватель кафедры психологии, Приднестровский государственный университет им. Т.Г. Шевченко, г. Тирасполь, Приднестровская Молдавская Республика, ORCID: <https://orcid.org/0009-0005-5898-852X>, e-mail: fylata_92@mail.ru

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