

Development of the two forms of social anxiety in adolescence

*Melita Puklek Levpušček**

University of Ljubljana, Department of psychology, Ljubljana, Slovenia

Abstract: In the last decade studies of social anxiety have focused on research of social anxiety in childhood and adolescence. They showed that social anxiety was related to negative self-perceptions and lower social adaptation. The research question not yet answered considers the developmental trend of social anxiety in various periods of adolescence. In the study we proposed that at least social anxiety in its cognitive form (i.e., worries and fear of negative social evaluation) would decrease from early to late adolescence. We were also interested in personal characteristics that predict prolongation of social anxiety in late adolescence. The initial sample consisted of 325 early, middle and late adolescents to whom measures of social anxiety, self-consciousness and self-perceptions were administered. Two well-known aspects of social anxiety were measured: (i) fear of negative social evaluation and (ii) social tension and inhibition. Early and middle adolescents were retested two years later at their transition to middle and late adolescence, respectively. Results from the first and the second assessment indicated that late adolescence is a time when the cognitive form of social anxiety in both adolescent males and females decreased. Social tension and inhibition showed a decrease only in adolescent females. Adolescent females reported more fear of negative social evaluation than males. Lower appraisal of one's own global and social competence and prolonged self-preoccupations were identified as characteristics of socially anxious late adolescents.

Key words: social anxiety, self perception, competence, adolescent development

Razvoj dveh oblik socialne anksioznosti v adolescenci

Melita Puklek Levpušček

Univerza v Ljubljani, Oddelek za psihologijo, Ljubljana

Povzetek: V zadnjih desetih letih so se raziskovalci, ki se ukvarjajo s proučevanjem socialne anksioznosti, osredotočili na njen pojav v otroštvu in adolescenci. Ugotovili so, da je socialna anksioznost v teh razvojnih obdobjih povezana z negativnim samoznavanjem in slabšo socialno adaptacijo. Še vedno pa ni raziskovalnega odgovora na vprašanje, kako se različne oblike socialne anksioznosti kažejo v različnih obdobjih adolescence. Predpostavljamo, da se vsaj socialna anksioznost, ki ima kognitivno komponento (t.j. zaskrbljenost in strah pred negativnim socialnim vrednotenjem), znižuje iz zgodnje v pozno adolescenco. Zanimale so nas tudi nekatere osebnostne značilnosti, ki napovedujejo socialno anksioznost v pozni adolescenci. V raziskavi je v prvi fazi sodelovalo 325 različno starih mladostnikov. Izpolnjevali so različne vprašalnike socialne anksioznosti, zaznavanja lastne kompetentnosti in pozornosti nase.

**Naslov / address: doc. dr. Melita Puklek Levpušček, Univerza v Ljubljani, Oddelek za psihologijo, Aškerčeva 2, 1000 Ljubljana, Slovenija, e-mail: melita.puklek@ff.uni-lj.si*

Proučevali smo dve znani obliki socialne anksioznosti: (i) zaskrbljenost in strah pred negativnim socialnim vrednotenjem ter (ii) socialno tesnoba in inhibicija. Dve mlajši skupini mladostnikov (zgodnja, srednja adolescenca) sta bili ponovno testirani dve leti kasneje. Rezultati prvega in drugega testiranja so pokazali, da je pozna adolescenca obdobje, ko socialna anksioznost v obliki strahu pred negativnim vrednotenjem upade tako pri fantih kot pri dekletih. Socialna tesnoba in inhibicija je upadla le pri dekletih. Dekleta kažejo več strahu pred negativnim socialnim vrednotenjem kot fantje. Za socialno anksiozne mladostnike v obdobju pozne adolescence je značilna slabša samoocena splošne in socialne kompetentnosti ter pretirana pozornost na javni in privatni vidik sebe.

Ključne besede: socialna anksioznost, samozaznavanje, kompetentnost, razvoj mladostnikov

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Social anxiety as a state of emotional distress, worries about self-presentation and avoiding behaviour in real or imagined social interactions has rarely been the subject of research on adolescence. Nevertheless, the existing studies - some of them are listed below - confirmed the hypothesis that social anxiety in adolescents was related to numerous problems, especially to impaired social functioning and negative self-perceptions.

Social anxiety was found to be associated with lower peer acceptance and neglected and rejected peer status (Inderbitzen, Walters & Bukowski, 1997; La Greca & Stone, 1993). Vernberg, Abwender, Ewell & Beery (1992) found negative relationship between social anxiety and establishment of intimacy and companionship in new peer relations. Those adolescents who faced high social anxiety were more likely to have lower perception of social acceptance, romantic appeal and social support than others (La Greca & Lopez, 1998). Especially highly socially anxious adolescent girls reported lower frequency of best friends, feelings of less competence in friendship relations and less intimate and supportive friendships than their less anxious classmates. Additionally, negative self-perceptions like lower self-appraisals of global and social competence (Puklek, 1997) and lower global self-worth (La Greca & Stone, 1993; Lawrence & Bennett, 1992), were consistently more frequent in socially more anxious adolescents than in their less anxious peers. The studies that were conducted on Slovene adolescents revealed significant associations between social anxiety and intense processing of self as a social object and imagination of the social world as a critical observer of adolescent (Puklek, 1997; Puklek & Vidmar, 2000). This kind of dysfunctional self-processing might be an important factor that influences one's performance, especially when a person is exposed to the audience. Socially anxious students may, for example, experience difficulties in academic performance while it is hard for them to express opinions or to ask for help from teacher in front of classmates. In a situation of performance in front of a group of classmates, socially anxious students might perceive more disturbing factors (e.g., lack of verbal skills, anticipation of failure, coping with a novel situation) and more frequent intrusive thoughts (e.g., "what do others think of my performance" or "others see I'm nervous") then

their less socially anxious mates (Puklek, 2001).

The question not yet answered considers the developmental trend of social anxiety in different periods of adolescence. Authors who focused their studies of social anxiety on adolescents mostly investigated the two major components of social anxiety: fear of negative evaluation as a cognitive feature and social avoidance and distress as a behavioural feature of social anxiety. Developmentally, Buss (1980) proposed fearful and self-conscious shyness as the two forms of child's social anxiety that develop sequentially. Early-appearing fearful shyness seems to be more temperamentally based (Rothbart & Mauro, 1990) and it is close to the above-mentioned social avoidance and distress. Rubin & Asendorpf (1993) suggested that this type of social withdrawal originates from approach-avoidance conflict and called this group of children behaviourally inhibited to the unfamiliar or shy. Later-appearing self-conscious shyness, according to Buss, develops when a child is able to think about the self and attains sensitivity to criticism of others. It is more an aspect of personality, determined by experience and the representation of self, than of temperament (Rothbart & Mauro, 1990). Self-conscious shyness with its relation to a cognitive structure is thus close to fear of negative evaluation.

Adolescence is a development period marked by increased self-consciousness, concerns with public self-image and a kind of egocentrism that prevents adolescents to differentiate between their focus of thoughts and thought occupations of others, especially peers (Elkind, 1967). Thus, adolescence might be time of increased vulnerability to social anxiety, especially in its cognitive form as a fear of negative social evaluation. Some studies found early adolescence as a period of the most significant anxious self-preoccupation (see Cheek & Carpentieri, 1986; Elkind & Bowen, 1979; Puklek, 1997). According to Elkind's proposition that self-consciousness declines by late adolescence and according to other development characteristics of late adolescence, like decreasing of peers' influence, focusing on intimate relationships, having more social experiences and developing sociocentric view with more accurate social understanding, we could infer that at least social anxiety in its cognitive form as an intense preoccupation with social self and fear of negative social evaluation decreases from early to late adolescence.

In the first wave of the present study we found approval of the above-mentioned hypothesis (Puklek & Vidmar, 2000). Fear of negative social evaluation was more present in 12- and 16- year-olds than 20-year-olds. The gender impact was also found: adolescent females reported more fear of negative social evaluation than males. When comparing the three age groups and the gender factor, females and males did not differ in their experience of tension and inhibition in social contact. However, a significant interaction between age and gender indicated the possibility of different developmental trends of social tension and inhibition for males and females.

To find additional support for the age trend and gender differences in social anxiety, we replicated the study with the two younger groups two years later. We expected a decrease in fear of negative social evaluation especially at the transition

to late adolescence. No hypothesis was made for the age trend of fear of negative social evaluation at the transition to middle adolescence because only weak support was found for its decrease in previous studies (Mallet & Rodriguez Tomé, 1999 - a non-significant decrease from age 10 to 14; Puklek, 1997 - a non-significant decrease from age 12 to 16). Social distress and inhibition were predicted to show more stability across adolescence than the cognitive form of social anxiety. Gender differences were expected only in relation to fear of negative social evaluation.

The second aim of the study was to determine some personal characteristics of adolescents who continue to score high on social anxiety even in late adolescence. In this age period adolescents are expected to free themselves from egocentric self-preoccupation by developing a more sociocentric view (Elkind & Bowen, 1979). By establishing a firm and stable identity they should be able to divert attention from self to others and consequently, they should be less reluctant to disclose themselves and less subjected to an imagined critical observer. Moreover, a need for group affiliation and conformity to peers as a way of solidifying aspects of identity in earlier stages of adolescence greatly diminish later on. Late adolescents are involved in groups to a much lower degree than their younger counterparts (Levy-Warren, 1999). Despite of these developmental expectations some late adolescents still maintain and perform a self-image of a shy and reticent person with avoidant behaviour in socially evaluative situations. The question of interest is thus how highly socially anxious late adolescents perceive themselves and how much self-aware are they in comparison to other age mates who experience less anxious feelings. The first hypothesis in this domain was that late adolescents who experience strong fear of negative social evaluation would have the highest public and private self-consciousness and the most negative perceptions of self-competence compared to their age mates with medium or low results on this aspect of social anxiety. The second hypothesis was that late adolescents who experience high tension and inhibition in social contacts would report the most negative self-perceptions but similar public and private self-consciousness as the groups with fewer problems in social contacts. These hypotheses were grounded in the results of the previous study on the group of 20-year-old students (Puklek, 1997). The results showed that the two forms of social anxiety were both moderately to highly positively related to perceptions of self-incompetence, but only fear of negative social evaluation was significantly positively related to higher private and public self-consciousness.

Method

Sample

The sample consisted of 325 adolescents at the first testing and of 171 adolescents at the second testing. At the first testing (Time 1), the three groups of adolescents were included: 12-year olds (Grade 6 in primary school, $M_{age} = 12.3$ years), 16-year olds

(Grade 2 in grammar school, $M= 16.1$ years) and 20-year olds (Year 2 at the university, $M= 20.5$ years). Only two younger groups were retested two years later (Time 2), at the age of 14 (Grade 8 in primary school) and age 18 (Grade 4 in grammar school). The number of participants in each age group and the number of male and female participants at Time 1 and Time 2 are shown in Table 1. The adolescents were students of different primary and grammar schools and university students in Ljubljana. They came from families with different educational backgrounds. In retest, drop-outs took place in both groups: 31% and 3.2% drop-out in the group of males and females aged 14, respectively, and 25% and 30% drop-out in the group of males and females aged 18, respectively. Females slightly prevailed in the age group of 14 years (62%). The initial scores of the two forms of social anxiety (Time 1) showed no significant differences between the adolescents of the two younger groups who were retested and those not retested.

Measures

Social anxiety

Social Anxiety Scale for Adolescents (Puklek, 1997) is a 28-item scale answerable on a 5-point scale. The items describe cognitive (worry), affective (fear, tension) and behavioural (inhibition, avoidance) aspects of adolescent's social anxiety, experienced in different social situations (contacts with peers, exposure in school, performance in front of an audience, parties etc.). Its subscales are:

- *Apprehension and Fear of Negative Evaluation (AFNE)*; The 15 items cover the domain of adolescent's fears, worries and anticipations of possible negative evaluations by peers and audience when performing publicly. This subscale represents a cognitive-emotional aspect of social anxiety. Its internal consistency was confirmed in both age groups at the two times of assessment: time 1: $\alpha = .83$ (age 12) and $\alpha = .89$ (age 16); time 2: $\alpha = .89$ (age 14) and

Table 1: Sample by age and gender at Time 1 and Time 2.

	Time 1			
	age 12	age 16	age 20	all
males	55	52	54	161
females	63	47	54	164
all	118	99	108	325
	Time 2			
	age 14	age 18	all	
males	38	39	77	
females	61	33	94	
all	99	72	171	

$\alpha = .91$ (age 18). AFNE has shown to have good concurrent validity. It correlated positively with the Social Anxiety subscale of Feningstein's et al. (1975) Self-Consciousness Scale (SCS): $r_s = .55$ and $.59$ for 12- and 16-year-olds, respectively. Substantial correlations were also found with Public Self-Consciousness subscale of SCS: $r_s = .62$ and $.51$ and with self-perceptions of global ($r_s = .35$ and $.40$) and social ($r_s = .33$ and $.49$) incompetence for 12- and 16-year-olds, respectively (Puklek, 1997).

- *Tension and Inhibition in Social Contact (TISC)*: The 13 items describe social tension/relaxation, speech or behaviour inhibition and readiness to exposure in interactions with known and unknown peers, opposite-sex peers and dissimilar people and in class discussion. It represents a behavioural-emotional aspect of social anxiety. The internal consistency of this subscale was also confirmed in both age groups at the two times of assessment: time 1: $\alpha = .71$ (age 12) and $\alpha = .83$ (age 16); time 2: $\alpha = .82$ (age 14) and $\alpha = .80$ (age 18). TISC correlated positively with the Social Anxiety subscale of Feningstein's et al. (1975) Self-Consciousness Scale (SCS): $r_s = .65$ and $.53$ for 12- and 16-year-olds, respectively. Substantial correlations were also found with self-perception of social incompetence: $r_s = .66$ and $.68$ for the two age groups, respectively (Puklek, 1997).

Self-consciousness and self-incompetence

Public and Private Self-Consciousness subscales of SCS (Feningstein, Scheier & Buss, 1975), Perceived Incompetence Scale (Bezinović, 1988) and Perceived Social Competence Scale (Puklek, 1997) were used to determine the associations of self-consciousness and personal incompetence with high social anxiety in late adolescence.

- *Public Self-Consciousness*: Seven items measure awareness of the self as a social object that attracts attention of others, concerns with physical appearance, public self-presentation and others' appraisals. $\alpha = .79$ (Time 1), $\alpha = .79$ (Time 2).
- *Private Self-Consciousness*: Ten items measure awareness of one's own inner world, reflection about inner feelings, thoughts, motives and changes in mood. $\alpha = .79$ (Time 1), $\alpha = .79$ (Time 2).
- *Perceived Incompetence*: Ten items measure perception of self-(in)competence (i.e., doubts in successful work, feelings of insecurity and inadequacy). $\alpha = .84$ (Time 1), $\alpha = .84$ (Time 2).
- *Perceived Social Incompetence*: Thirteen bipolar items arranged as a 7-point semantic differential measure perception of self-incompetence in social interaction (being open, relaxed, communicative and active in a group, being liked by others and interesting for them). $\alpha = .88$ (Time 1), $\alpha = .87$ (Time 2).

Results

Social anxiety: within-subject changes and between-group differences

Paired-samples *t*-test was applied to test the hypothesis about developmental change/stability in the two forms of social anxiety in adolescence.

Figure 1 and Figure 2 show within-group changes in the two forms of social anxiety. In the two-year interval both fear of negative social evaluation (AFNE) and social tension and inhibition (TISC) significantly decreased within the group of older adolescents (age 16 to age 18), AFNE: $t(52) = 3.21, p < .01$, TISC: $t(58) = 3.61, p <$

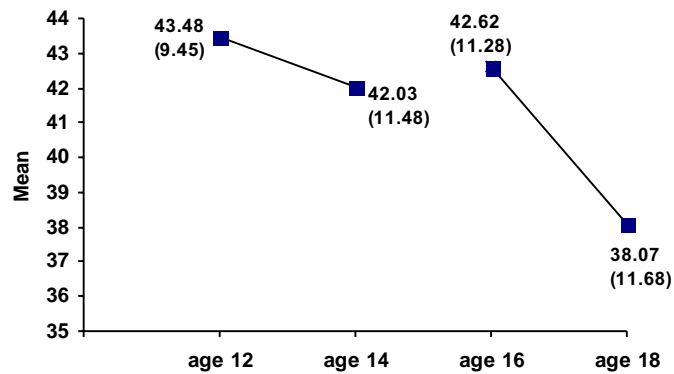


Figure 1: Means (SDs) of AFNE of the two age groups at Time 1 (age 12 and age 16) and Time 2 (age 14 and age 18).

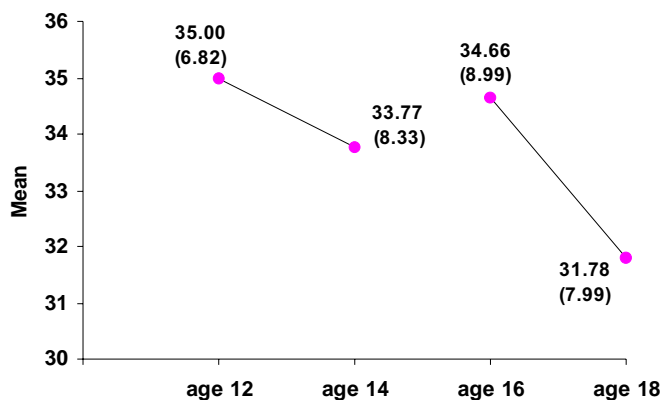


Figure 2: Means (SDs) of TISC of the two age groups at Time 1 (age 12 and age 16) and Time 2 (age 14 and age 18).

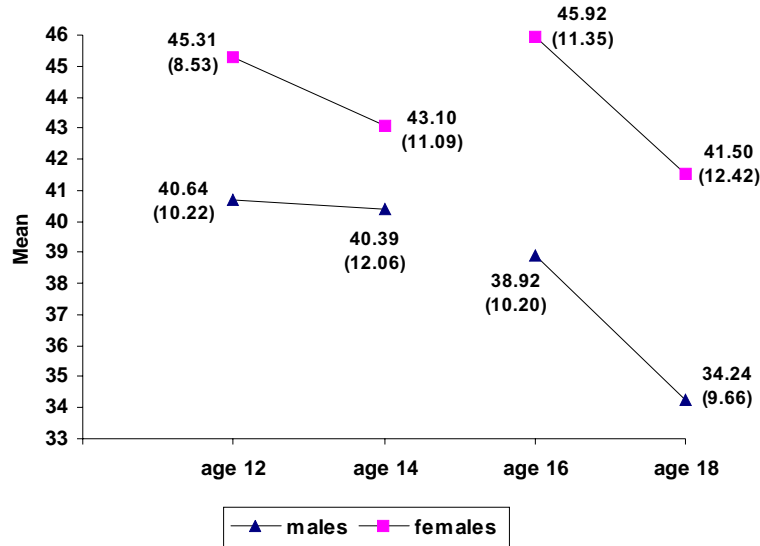


Figure 3: Means (SDs) of AFNE in the two age groups tested at Time 1 (age 12 and age 16) and Time 2 (age 14 and age 18), adolescent males and females separately.

.001 but not within the group of younger adolescents (age 12 to age 14), AFNE: $t(79) = 1.20$, $p = .23$, TISC: $t(78) = 1.46$, $p = .15$. A 2 (Age) x 2 (Gender) ANOVA was used to determine possible age and gender differences and their interaction in the two forms of social anxiety at Time 2. Fourteen year olds adolescents tended to have higher fear of negative social evaluation (AFNE) than 18-year olds adolescents, $F(1, 141) = 3.53$, $p = .06$, adolescent females had higher scores than males, $F(1, 141) = 7.37$, $p < .01$, but no interaction between age and gender was found, $F(1, 141) = 2.36$, $p = .13$. On the other hand, neither age nor gender effect was found for TISC, $F(1, 146) = .59$ (age), $F(1, 146) = .83$ (gender), $F(1, 146) = .88$ (interaction). The only significant gender difference appeared in the group of 18-year olds. Female adolescents of age 18 reported more fear of negative social evaluation than their male counterparts, $t(29, 29) = 2.89$, $p < .001$.

The mean scores show that the general trend of fear of negative social evaluation was somewhat different for adolescent males and females (see Figure 3). Especially the pattern in middle adolescence shows that male adolescents probably do not experience a significant change in their fear of negative evaluation in this age period. On the other hand, female adolescents might heighten their social anxiety in its cognitive form around the age of 16. A decrease was found within both genders between age 16 and age 18, males: $t(24) = 2.74$, $p < .05$, females: $t(27) = 1.98$, $p = .06$. In contrast, a stable pattern of results in fear of negative evaluation appeared between age 12 and 14 within both genders, males: $t(30) = .12$, $p = .90$, females:

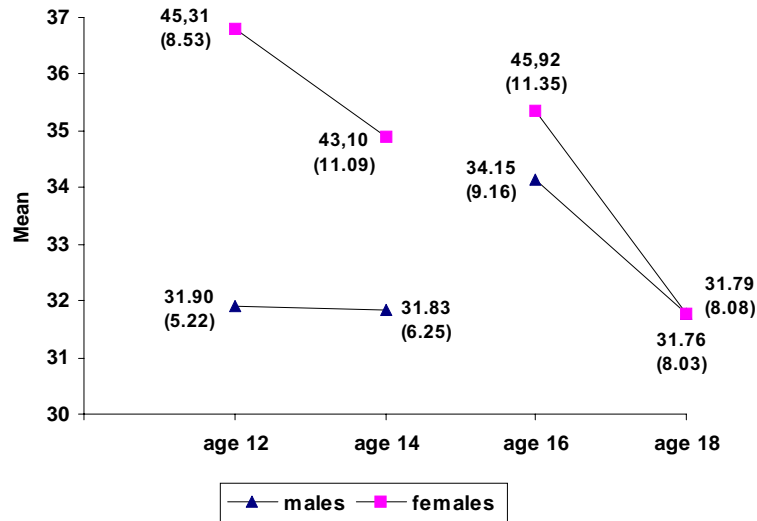


Figure 4: Means (SDs) of TISC in the two age groups tested at Time 1 (age 12 and age 16) and Time 2 (age 14 and age 18), adolescent males and females separately.

$t(47) = 1.52, p = .13$.

Mean scores in Figure 4 show that the general trend for social tension and inhibition differed between adolescent males and females. For adolescent males, the only upward deviation appeared at the age of 16. For adolescent females, the mean scores indicate a trend of decrease from age 12 to age 18. As far as within-subjects comparisons are concerned, a significant decline was observed for both gender groups from age 16 to age 18, males: $t(33) = 2.45, p < .05$, females: $t(24) = 2.63, p < .05$ and marginally significant decline for females from age 12 to age 14, $t(49) = 1.86, p = .07$.

Self-incompetence and self-consciousness in socially anxious late adolescents

Late adolescents were divided into three groups on the basis of their scores on AFNE and TISC. The three groups (low, medium and high) were then compared according to their self-reported self-consciousness and self-incompetence.

Table 2 shows differences in the perception of self-incompetence and self-consciousness in late adolescents with low, medium and high scores on the two forms of social anxiety. Late adolescents with high fear of negative social evaluation reported the least favourable self-appraisals of competence and the highest private and public self-consciousness compared to late adolescents with moderate and low fear of negative social evaluation. Late adolescents who reported high tension and inhibi-

Table 2. Comparison of late adolescents with low, medium and high scores on AFNE and TISC (20-year-olds (Time 1) and 18-year-olds (Time 2) together).

	AFNE			<i>F</i>
	Low	Medium	High	
SI & SC	<i>M (SD); N</i>	<i>M (SD); N</i>	<i>M(SD); N</i>	
Global SI	5.05 (4.60); 51	10.24 (6.14); 66	14.20 (6.14); 46	31.46***
Social SI	32.58 (12.08); 50	38.20 (10.28); 66	46.20 (13.05); 44	16.06***
Private SC	20.77 (7.46); 48	22.68 (6.93); 65	28.65 (6.66); 43	15.54***
Public SC	12.67 (4.87); 48	14.77 (4.83); 65	19.86 (4.62); 43	26.99***
	TISC			
	Low	Medium	High	
SI & SC	<i>M (SD); N</i>	<i>M (SD); N</i>	<i>M(SD); N</i>	<i>F</i>
Global SI	6.07 (4.91); 45	9.80 (6.08); 74	12.86 (7.17); 51	14.56***
Social SI	27.22 (7.98); 44	38.29 (9.15); 72	48.76 (12.10); 50	55.82***
Private SC	23.73 (8.48); 41	23.69 (7.48); 74	22.82 (7.88); 49	.22
Public SC	15.05 (5.83); 42	15.19 (5.37); 73	16.41 (5.47); 49	.92

Note. AFNE = Apprehension and Fear of Negative Evaluation, TISC = Tension and Inhibition in Social Contact, SI = Self-Incompetence, SC = Self-Consciousness.

Low/high group: half a standard deviation below/above the mean on AFNE or TISC.

The groups of 18- and 20-year-olds did not differ in their scores on AFNE or TISC and were thus pooled to enlarge the sample.

The correlation between low/medium/high group membership on AFNE and TISC was low ($r = .18$).

*** $p < .001$.

tion in social contacts perceived their general and social competence more negatively than their counterparts with average and low social tension and inhibition, but do not differ in self-consciousness from the other two groups.

Discussion

The aims of the present study were twofold: (a) to find support for the hypothesis about developmental change/stability in the two forms of social anxiety in adolescence, and (b) to determine some personal characteristics of adolescents who score high on social anxiety in late adolescence.

The results showed some support for proposed developmental trend of the two forms of social anxiety. Apprehension and fear of negative social evaluation generally appeared to be more intensive in early than late adolescence. In both adolescent males and females, it decreased from middle to late adolescence but there was no change in social anxiety in the group of early adolescents at their transition to middle adolescence. The results from the first and the second assessment imply the conclusion that adolescents aged 12 to 16 experienced similar preoccupations and fears of

negative social evaluation from peers and audience when performing publicly. Not earlier than late adolescence is a time of decrease in cognitive form of social anxiety. The results can be interpreted in the frame of Elkind's and Selman's sociocognitive perspective of adolescent development. Less self-preoccupation and less engagement with critical imaginary audience, ability of societal perspective taking and more sociocentric view are possible factors that are related to less worries and fears about negative social evaluations in late adolescence.

Although the results in the first assessment indicated that social tension and inhibition could be more stable across adolescence than fear of negative social evaluation (Puklek & Vidmar, 2000), the replicated study did not fully confirm this assumption. Especially girls showed a decrease in experiencing social tension and inhibition from early to late adolescence and within the two-year interval in both age groups. Shyness and social inhibition may be seen as phenomena with temperamental origins (e.g., Kagan et.al, 1993). However, they may also appear and generalize across situations if unfavourable social encounters are experienced, or they might be a result of expectations of negative social evaluations (Rubin & Asendorpf, 1993). Accordingly, possible interpretation of decreasing social tension and inhibition in adolescent females would be that girls in their early adolescent years have more self-doubts about social functioning and are thus more inhibited and distressed in social situations like interacting with unknown peers, making contacts at parties, expressing attitude in classroom discussions etc., than in their later adolescent years.

As was hypothesized, gender differences were found only in relation to fear of negative social evaluation. The results confirmed the findings of the previous study on Slovene adolescents that adolescent females show higher social anxiety in its cognitive form as worries about negative social evaluation than adolescent males, but do not differ in social tension and inhibition from their male age mates (Puklek, 1997; Puklek & Vidmar, 2000). The results are consistent with the previous findings about gender differences in experiencing fear of negative evaluation in adolescents (La Greca & Lopez, 1998; La Greca & Stone, 1993; Mallet & Rodriguez-Tomé, 1999). Feminine sex-role is obviously more oriented towards mirroring one's own public appearance. Adolescent girls were also found to be more self-occupied than boys; they perceived themselves less physically attractive and expressed more worries about their public appearance than boys (Kimmel & Weiner, 1995; Muuss, 1988). Nevertheless, the results showed that late adolescent males experienced similar social tension and inhibition as their younger counterparts. The results thus imply the conclusion that adolescent males of different age might experience similar intensity of fears in interpersonal relations, especially when facing contingent social interaction where an individual's behaviour is not scripted and it depends on responses of other conversational partner. In future studies it would thus be interesting to compare social skills of adolescent males and females in interaction with peers and as well as find out if adolescent males experience the same or different difficulties in establishing close relationships as their female counterparts.

Socially anxious late adolescents, either showing more cognitive or more behavioural features of social anxiety, perceived themselves as more incompetent (generally and specially in social interactions) than low or moderate socially anxious age mates. Late adolescents with strong fear of negative social evaluation were found to be still preoccupied with their inner world and their image of the self as a social object. Social anxiety in its cognitive form may thus continue in adulthood in individuals with prolonged self-preoccupations and concerns about others' evaluation. Lower appraisal of one's own global and social competence could be another detrimental feature of social anxiety in late adolescence and adulthood. However, the self-report nature of this study does not provide an answer to the question whether negative self-perceptions are in accordance with actual behaviour of socially anxious individuals. Additional studies using observational methods or acquaintance ratings are necessary to answer this question. Some previous studies namely showed that although adolescents who anticipated negative social evaluations perceived themselves as less socially competent, the other informants (e.g., important peer) did not confirm their negative perception of social skills (Jones & Briggs, 1984; Puklek & Vidmar, 2000). On the other hand, other ratings of socially inhibited adolescents confirmed the assumption that these adolescents are less socially skilled than other age mates (Puklek & Vidmar, 2000). In counselling practice it would be thus important to differentiate between adolescents with various forms of social anxiety. Work with adolescents who anticipate negative social impression and are well equipped with social skills should be directed toward encouragement of self-assertive behaviour in social situations. In addition, adolescent's dysfunctional self-processing should be identified and modified. On the other hand, adolescents who are socially tensed and inhibited need professional help in developing their social skills as well.

The limitation of the present study is certainly the small sample size of adolescents who were retested. Moreover, the sample consisted only of adolescents who were students of different schools and faculties in Ljubljana. The results can thus not be generalized to a larger population. In the future, researchers in this area should address many issues that would shed light on developmental manifestations of social anxiety through the entire life span and show possible influential role of social anxiety in establishing and maintaining one's close relationships and representing oneself in evaluative social situations.

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