

Shaping of personality of Russian youngsters during the pre-perestroika and post-perestroika periods of development of society

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Abstract. Introduction – socio-political and socio-economic changes in society largely define a developing personality. Goal – to conduct a psychodiagnostic evaluation of the changes in basic personal characteristics of young students in the context of Russian society development. Results: the comparison of two groups of medical student (both groups are identical: the second course, the department of general medicine, Yaroslavl State Medical University). Testing of 1992 ($n = 243$) and 2016 ($n = 197$) using the 16-PF Questionnaire and the POI reveals two main tendencies. The first tendency is the increase of the general level of tension (the 16-PF scales: C, I, O, Q4 – all the quantitative indices have increased, $p < 0.01$, Student's t -test). The second tendency is a significant growth of the efficiency of personal characteristics providing self-regulation and voluntary behaviour (the 16-PF scales: E, G, H, Q3 are analogous to the first tendency; the SAV scale of the POI also reports a growth with high statistical values). Discussion: the respondents from the first group were born in 1972–1973. Prenatal maturation, babyhood, junior school, and early adolescent age took place in the epoch of a high degree of stability and succession in the development of society. The respondents from the second group were born in 1998–1999. The samples are separated by a generation. The second group (2016 testing) reports a high level of neuro-psychic tension during socio-psychological adaptation and, consequently, the growth of efforts in developing voluntary regulation of social behavior. Evidently, there is value of self-actualization in the new reality.

Key words: perestroika, personality psychology, stress, arbitrariness, values of self-actualization.

1 Introduction

On the one hand, we can argue that socio-political and socio-economic changes in society largely define a developing personality. This is associated with the dynamics of public opinion and economic structure reflected in the micro-social environment of personality at early stages of ontogenesis (related to different historical-social periods of the establishment of society).

Thus, the theory of generations by Neil Howe and William Strauss became very popular in modern American literature [1, 2]. The analysis of research in this area allowed scientists to conclude that a socio-psychological characteristic of generations is mostly defined by a large group of social factors including the system of relations between generations,

socio-economic transformation of society, fashion, system of existential values, traditions etc. In addition, as stressed by the authors, a considerable part of values that form a personality is laid up to the age of 12. The crucial importance of the periods of early ontogenesis in the formation of a personality is also reported by some other scientists [3, 4].

On the other hand, it is rather difficult to verify empirically (by means of a psychological experiment) the effectiveness of these factors.

The juxtaposition of test results obtained from different generations of respondents (in our case, respondents born in 1973 – the “pre-perestroika” generation in Russia and respondents born in 1999 – the “post-perestroika” generation in Russia) can provide additional information about the relationships between a personality and society.

2 The goal of study

To conduct a psycho-diagnostic evaluation of the changes in basic personal characteristics of young students in the context of the development of Russian society.

3 The design of study

The study involved medical students of Yaroslavl State Medical University. A full version of the project includes approximately 10 psycho-diagnostic techniques.

In this publication, we discuss the results of the application of the 16-PF (R.B. Cattell's Personality Factor Questionnaire, a full version) and Self-Actualizing Value Scale of the POI (E. Shostrom). Both inquiries were adapted for the Russian sample by the research psychologists from Yaroslavl State University (for non-commercial use and research purposes only).

Both samples of respondents were levelled by their structure as thoroughly as possible.

The first stage of psycho-diagnostics was conducted in 1992. The sample consisted of 243 students of the second study year of the Department of General Medicine born in 1973. The results of psycho-diagnostics have been kept in the project's archive for 24 years and used for writing this publication.

The first stage of psycho-diagnostics was conducted in 2016. The sample consisted of 197 students of the second study year of the Department of General Medicine born in 1997.

The first group represents personal characteristics of young people, whose bearing, early maturing and youth were in the period of developed socialism (birth and early development in the 1970s and the beginning of the XX century). This period was distinguished by maximal social protection and aid to mothers in caring for a child (a large network of nurseries, Takeaways, day care centres, summer camps etc.), perspectives and guaranties of paid job and pensions provision. We can characterize this period as a period of stability and conservatism (often referred to as the era of stagnation) in the material life, which eased such part of personality's experiences as reflection of a life perspective; in some cases, people could even neglect it.

The second group (birth in 1999 and early formation of personality in 2010s) found itself almost in the opposite situation [5]. Social services had not yet been reformed in the light of new conditions (many elements in the system of social protection were lost). Socio-psychological ambience in the society and socio-economic status of society itself were characterized by a high degree of uncertainty in the perspectives of development. Besides, people experienced a high level of tension in the issues of job search and pensions provision.

In fact, we have registered some polarity in the state of society and it was important for us to understand in what way the characteristics of young people, who had found themselves inside these processes, began to change.

Table 1. 16PF Questionnaire.

The 16-PF factors	Mean values by groups		<i>t</i>	<i>p</i>
	1973–1992	1999–2016		
Factor A	11	13	5.78	0.01
Factor B	8	13	9.71	0.01
Factor C	14	17	6.00	0.01
Factor E	13	16	6.23	0.01
Factor F	16	16	0.85	—
Factor G	12	13	4.00	0.01
Factor H	14	16	4.52	0.01
Factor I	11	13	4.87	0.01
Factor L	9	12	8.21	0.01
Factor M	11	14	6.87	0.01
Factor N	9	12	8.20	0.01
Factor O	12	16	5.61	0.01
Factor Q1	9	12	9.10	0.01
Factor Q2	8	12	11.00	0.01
Factor Q3	11	13	7.40	0.01
Factor Q4	12	16	6.71	0.01

4 Results

The results obtained during the processing of the data of R.B. Cattell's Questionnaire are represented in Table 1 (mean values of the sample are represented in raw scores). Statistical significance has been verified for the level of significance by the Student's *t*-test.

The differences of the investigated samples by the 16PF Questionnaire (a Student's *t*-test coefficient).

The experience of the application of R.B. Cattell's questionnaire enables us to unite the groups of traits in five main blocks and rely on them in comparing the personality's response to a drastic change of circumstances.

The first block of personality's traits involves the characteristics regulating personality's behaviour in a wide social context, in other words, in macro-society: A+ ("sociability", "communicative competence"), F+ ("impulsivity", "high optimism"), H+ ("courage", "freedom of entering contacts"). We see that two factors out of three have a greater influence on the behaviour, which makes the "post-perestroika" generation more communicable, open, and active in interaction with society.

The second block encompasses the relations in micro-society: E+ ("activity, initiative"), G+ ("responsibility in relations"), L- ("vulnerability, suspiciousness, envy"), N+ ("cautiousness", "diplomacy", "prudence"), Q2+ ("independence from a group", "quick wit", "generating one's solutions"). Thus, we can report more activity, reliance on personal opinion, more diplomacy, and more responsibility in a growing generation formed in the "post-perestroika" epoch. At the same time, the "payment" for the progress in relations is growing – the tension in relations is enhancing and the level of trust to others is reducing.

The third block contains a set of personal qualities providing intellectual success in a broad sense: B+ ("ability to catch the information quickly", "abstractedness, logic"), E+ ("activity, initiative"), M+ ("imagination"), N+ ("cautiousness", "diplomacy", "prudence"), Q1 ("independence, radical judgements"). The difference in five (raw) scores by the factor B

has become a unique index for our data. (We are supplementing the reliability of these indices now by enlarging the volume of processed records of each sample up to 500 documents and using the analysis of data obtained by Rudolf Amthauer's Intelligence Structure Test). It is important to stress that the indices of the rest four personal factors have also increased. A new generation (as shown by the results of the study) has high and flexible intelligence, independent judgements, and ability to implement their ideas in practice.

The fourth block involves personal factors that are "closely associated with the emotional regulation of behaviour": C+ ("power of I"), I+ ("emotional sensibility, vulnerability"), O+ ("proneness to a sense of guilty, restlessness, sensibility to external approval"), Q4 ("high tension", "frustration", "fatigue", "irritability"). As shown in the table, it is in this group that sharp (+4 raw scores) increases of values by two scales out of five O and Q4 (close to "neurotic") as well as the growth of the factor I values) are registered. In addition, the ratio of the C/Q4 scales is interpreted as a diagnostically important index of emotional sustainability of a personality. It has somewhat deteriorated in the "post-perestroika" generation (in spite of the higher factor C – "power of I"). The group of qualities under analysis shows that the quick rearrangement (in a scale of one generation) of the profile of basic personal traits under the influence of the social transformation of society is accompanied by great psychological difficulties.

Finally, we are interested in the dynamics of the fifth block scales – the group of personal traits, which directly provide a voluntary regulation of behaviour: E+ ("activity, initiative"), G+ ("strong super Ego"), H+ ("social boldness"), Q3+ ("control of wishes and awareness of social demands to deeds", and "a gyroscopic factor of a personality" as figuratively described by R.B. Cattell). We see statistically significant enhancement of the manifestation of all the traits involved in this block.

In addition, the evaluation of the mean values of these groups by the Self-Actualizing Value scale (SAV) of E.L. Shostrom's Personal Orientation Inventory (the POI) has given analogue statistically significant differences (the 1992 group – 16 raw scores, the 2016 group – 17 raw scores, $p < 0.001$).

5 Discussion

We can rely on Vladimir Yadov's idea of dispositional "I" in discussing our results. He defines personality as a multidimensional dynamic space, where each dimension corresponds to a certain type of social relations. Besides, each personality has a specific and dynamic degree of involvement and participation in various relations. V. Yadov says that a person changes his behaviour and needs depending on specific conditions of activity due to incomplete coincidence of dispositions of different levels with the demands and conditions of reality. The highest level of these dispositions is a system of personal orientations on life goals and ways to achieve them. This dispositional level is crucial in self-regulation of behaviour, since the formation of value orientations meets the highest social needs of a personality in self-development and self-expression. Thus, new dispositions are the generator of changes in personal characteristics. This is mostly found in personality's general orientation (motivation, interests, and concentration on particular areas of activity) and its values (dominating system of terminal and instrumental values).

Viktor Novikov analyzed the issue of social relations basing on the example of Russian and foreign research [7]. He came to conclusion that "the study of relations within a framework of social psychology should be continued from the viewpoint of changes influencing a high level of dispositions and from the viewpoint of the activity of person's position caused rather by changes produced by the personality's development than by a simple response to the situation."

We assume that this conclusion is of global importance and can be extended to the development of all the aspects of personality.

The changes in Russia's macro-environment touched all the aspects of social life, and, consequently, influenced all the aspects of personality's development.

These factors are:

- new information about the world (new laws of functioning of political, economic and social systems in the country);
- new emotional experience associated with the changes in a lifestyle, a social status etc.;
- new forms of behaviour contradicting to the previous ones.

Based on this model, we see an essential contradiction between the generations of 1970s and 2000s transformed into significant changes at the level of personality.

The depth of differences between generations substantially increases the risk of interpersonal conflicts through the transformation of a "semantic field" and a clash of personal values. D.A. Leontiev says that these formations are assimilated in the structure of personality. Besides, they are relatively independent from contextual factors [8].

We can add that a deficit of comfort conditions for the development of personality established by the beginning of the XXI century has played a mobilizing role in the ontogenesis of the "post-perestroika" generation and caused the growth of many best qualities contributing to better social and labour adaptation of personality. Besides, it sharpened the issue of personality's self-actualization.

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