

**RPTSS 2017**  
**International Conference on Research Paradigms Transformation  
in Social Sciences**

**PROBLEMS OF PERSONALITY TYPE TRANSFORMATION IN  
CURRENT CONDITIONS OF RUSSIAN SOCIETY**

E.G. Pozdeeva (a)\*, I.R. Trostinskaya (b), L.I. Evseeva (c), R.A. Ivanova (d)

\*Corresponding author

(a) Peter the Great St.-Petersburg Polytechnic University, Polytechnicheskaya Street, 29, St. Petersburg, 195251, Russian Federation, [elepzd@mail.ru](mailto:elepzd@mail.ru), 89219510011

(b) Peter the Great St.-Petersburg Polytechnic University, Polytechnicheskaya Street, 29, St. Petersburg, 195251, Russian Federation, [trostinskaya\\_ir@spbstu.ru](mailto:trostinskaya_ir@spbstu.ru), 89112855615

(c) Peter the Great St.-Petersburg Polytechnic University, Polytechnicheskaya Street, 29, St. Petersburg, 195251, Russian Federation, [levseeva@mail.ru](mailto:levseeva@mail.ru), 89219708175

(d) Peter the Great St.-Petersburg Polytechnic University, Polytechnicheskaya Street, 29, St. Petersburg, 195251, Russian Federation, [agraphari@gmail.com](mailto:agraphari@gmail.com), 89217906460

***Abstract***

The article examines features of stability and transformation of the personality type emerging as a normative and value image of the modern Russian society. Based on approaches of Erich Fromm, David Riesman, Yuri Levada, two trends can be revealed: one of them aims to preserve those archetypal characteristics so typical of "Soviet human", another one deals with formation of new properties that would meet goals of market oriented society and define features of individual success. Russian society is characteristic of global processes of values modernization, reasoned by R. Inglehart and C. Welzel, and reflecting individual's pursuance of greater personal freedom and self-expression. The new value system of the Russians is still nascent; giving up on old social and cultural reality is of phantom nature. Previous research analysis allows concluding that the personality type is balancing between two poles, caused by socio-economic conditions fluctuation, poor establishment of institutional factors for system implementation of the new model, missing of a clear vision of the future, which could serve as a reference. Russian society appears to be split according to the typological dominance factor into two groups - active and passive. The problem arises on how lack of uniform symbolic and semantic field effects the modern personality type formation as it leads to social relations mobility, ongoing risk and complex processes in semio-psychological space. However, the personality type instability may be also caused by socio-cultural specifics, traditions, lack of public communication space development, preservation of former institutional structures and a particular lifestyle.

© 2018 Published by Future Academy [www.FutureAcademy.org.UK](http://www.FutureAcademy.org.UK)

**Keywords:** Personality type, Soviet human, social character, life purposes, personality transformation.



This is an Open Access article distributed under the terms of the Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial 4.0 Unported License, permitting all non-commercial use, distribution, and reproduction in any medium, provided the original work is properly cited.

## 1. Introduction

The problem of modern human social type formation became actual on the background of socio-economic and political changes during the post-Soviet period of Russian society development. Global transformation of values towards creating conditions for freedom and self-expression within the framework of modernization and democratization, checking for strength and transforming traditions, penetrated Russia (Inglehart, Welzel, 2011). The general track of Russian society development over the last twenty-five years can be described with liberal and conservative trends confrontation, searching for the normative value foundations for the new order and preserving the values of the Russian world, limiting the state participation, and increasing demand for stability and a clear vision of the future (Bysov, 2015). The community is oriented towards a consumer society; personal interests begin to dominate the public ones on the background of decreasing state influence and expectations for public institutions (Gorshkov, 2016).

However, the image of the past, constructed in the popular mind and prevailing today, contains a range of important positive features, which is hard to leave for Russian people. Thus, in symbolic personality examples of Soviet era, the Russians indicate such positive qualities as commitment, sense of community, industry, friendliness, whereas the images of the modern human being are burdened with the negative traits of individualism, irresponsibility, hostility (Sikevich, 2016). Conflicting provisions create a special regime for normative and value aspects of personality transformation and institutional conditions that are combined to help or hinder the innovative development of the whole society. The Russian continuously wonders, what he should be to keep up with the times, and what normative and value sample should be utilized and transmitted to future generations.

## 2. Problem Statement

Sociological analysis of the changes occurring at the post-industrial stage of society development has conditioned the interest in the personality type, which embodied studies of a social nature in the works of E. Fromm and D. Riesman. Erich Fromm understood the social character as the core of the character structure common to most members of the same culture and driving human energy, desire of action meeting the requirements of culture (Fromm, 2006, p.107-108). As to D. Riesman, the social character means a kind of "attitude", in terms of which a person treats the world and people; he describes three generalized types of social character and the tendency for strengthening of the latter type, focusing on social environment (Ruthevich, 1993). The problem of the personality type transformation in Russian society, which in the 1990s made a leap to the market economy, was explored by Y. Levada (Levada, 1993). Having reconstructed the archetype of the "Soviet" human being, Y. Levada outlined its typical traits - confidence in the Russian/Soviet human exclusiveness and superiority; loyalty to the state and its ideology; committal to egalitarian approaches; constant feeling of discrimination taken for granted, which causes a permanent anxiety and increased attention to alien. Today, despite the value system shifting towards market benchmarks, democracy, freedom and enterprise, sociologists detect continuity of the Soviet type in personality characteristics that have a largely inhibitory effect on the changes in the country. According to L.D.Gudkov, the Russians have adapted and got used to forced changes, but failed

to understand them and to change the conditions of one's life (Gudkov, 2007, p.29). The problem of a currently modernizing society is the unique ability of the Russians to adapt to the repressive regime.

The values system of the Russians today incorporate both symbols of great power (the Empire, the heroic past), family values, relationships with relatives that support consolidation at the grassroots levels and facilitate adaptation to the repressive state, and attitudes to individual success and self-development. With that, the values of intermediate level do not emerge and even become suppressed, for example, those associated with the publicity, with more differentiated interests. Such structure of the values system, missing this middle level, which constitutes the basis of civil society, is characteristic of instability and temporality. Traces of this instability reveal themselves in widespread distrust, economic insecurity, also depending on the institutional system development, legal and political institutions co-operation, instruments of control, open and effective press, the level of parliamentarism development. Today, the whole system is out of service. In this situation, the life strategy of "simple social survival" becomes actual, basing on loyalty, individual and local transactions, meeting material, often solely consumer interest, on the lack of strategic vision (Gudkov, Dubin, & Levinson, 2009).

### **3. Research Questions**

The main issue that requires investigation is figuring out specific features of the modern Russian personality type. Society modernization is filtered by historical traditions (Welzel, Inglehart, & Klingemann, 2003). In this regard, the question calling special attention is the ratio of the old "Soviet" and the new "market" human traits in the modern personality type, and the impact it has on the general trends of society development. It is important to consider in analysis the conditions contributing retention or overcoming of the previous characteristics, preserving their stability to a certain extent. Comparison of the national trends with global trends of value dynamics reflected in the estimates of the Russians themselves is also relevant.

### **4. Purpose of the Study**

The study of the personality transformation problem in the context of rapidly changing Russian society under reformation aims at getting an up-to-date view of the dynamic aspects of personality type of Russian people, living in the conditions of increasingly individualistic attitudes, overlapping crisis cycles, unsustainable standard of living, instable political situation and rapid reformation of the institutional foundations of the social order.

### **5. Research Methods**

Today the main life purposes of the Russians, defining their activities, include the pursuit of social justice and social protection and the desire to understand what society is now being built in Russia. Studies of the Russians' life-world demonstrate two opposite opinions: about 40% of the Russians assess the current social situation as normal and 6% - as favorable, while 37% consider it as critical, and 5% as

catastrophic one. There is a split in public consciousness caused by the presence of mutually exclusive purposes (Toshchenko, 2016).

This inconsistency of life purposes indicates the state of society, which Toshchenko designated as "the society of injury". In his opinion, the Russian society in its development, having left the socialist past, failed to achieve its goals and became deeply disappointed in those values on behalf of which it had started out (Toshchenko, 2017).

The specifics of the Russian society changes can be expressed, in the apt words of the Russian sociologist Boris Grushin, as "socioquake", stressing an occurred tectonic shift in the life foundations, when the old norms and values had been destroyed, and in their place new ones began to emerge with great difficulty, but never matured. The Soviet era today is highly rated by the parameters of strength, order and efficiency. The post-Soviet period transformation mostly affected the spiritual, moral and psychological spheres, and the new values are still being formed. During a certain period, there has already been a shortage of high goals and values which were not reducible to the enrichment of some and the survival of others; this leads to spiritual emptiness and loss of common references (Grushin, 2001).

To date, it is still to be determined, whether the mental structures transform under the influence of institutions change, or institutions hold steady only in the presence of suitable mentality of the public and elites. It is obvious that mental structures cannot change as fast as political institutions. The image of power prevailing today, being reflected in the Russians' perception and representing their benchmark, combines rational and unconscious elements (Shestopal, 2015). Since the images in their essence are "stereoscopic" psychological things containing a bit of the unconscious in the depth, their change causes changing the whole optics of the image; this fact defines the interrelationship of sociological and psychological approaches in the study. There are two most obvious ways of the present stage understanding, namely liberal individualistic and authoritarian-communitarian. The first one focuses on the ideals of freedom, while authoritarian-communitarian ideas of democracy highlight strength, power and subordination as the principal ideals. Studies show approximately equal distribution – about one-third of the Russians share first and second vision, and also 30% of respondents support mixed version.

In this connection, the question arises on the ratio between the development parameters providing preservation of the essential attributes of the Soviet type human, and those facilitating formation of new features characteristic of a European human of the 21<sup>st</sup> century. As noted by V. Magun, in the period from 2008 to 2012, the value system of Russian society distinctly shifted towards individualist orientation, characteristic of the postsocialist countries (Hungary, the Czech Republic, Portugal and Israel) (Magun, Rudnev, & Schmidt, 2015). The desire to meet the European ideal reveals in the consumers' desire to get certain European brands, to change their appearance according to the European standards. This contradicts the increased dislike of the Russian majority for the European Union and the United States. An attitude to wealth also reveals a long-standing split between the desire of wealthy life and hostility towards the rich (Vinogradova, 2015). As to the Levada-Center studies, the Russians' archetype explored by Y. Levada is characteristic of the sense of pride in the country, in the president, along with the sense of the future insecurity, but combined with general optimism (Public opinion-2015, 2016).

At the individual level, the process of transition to the new models of life activities requires person's internal work concerning his abilities, knowledge and skills assessment in terms of rapidly

changing lifestyle; renovation of personal goals and ways to achieve them. In the opinion of A.V. Wozmitel, predominance of "collectivist" factors in the life motivation, weak involvement into the real life situation, rejection of private property as an effective means of solving social and economic problems, fear of freedom and risk, lack of self-confidence, social apathy - all these and some other characteristics give the modern subject little chance of survival and result into disintegrated existence in the modern social system (Vosmitel, 2002).

Deep causes of contradictory trends in the development of social personality types of modern Russian society lie in the Russian socio-cultural features (Yakovenko, 2012). The reasons for the reproduction of the phenomenon of socially helpless masses and traditional consciousness correspond to the conflict of "the proper and the actual". In the mass consciousness that has been developing in the framework of Orthodoxy for ages, the world is divided into two value blocks: the exalted (the proper) and the profane (the lowly being). Having such characteristic trait as idol-making, traditionally focused on routine, power-dependent life, the Russian faces the new normative requirement of a knowingly unachievable absolute. The most habitual and narrative type of a small person capable of existing and generating an atomized society suddenly changes into the model of active enterpriser, taking risks and ready for continuous activity for the sake of resulting overall growth of the living standard. Such change of heroes causes a crisis, conflict, on the contrary, promotes hiding in the past, what one can observe in reality, being abounded with nostalgic memories (Magaril, 2014).

In Soviet times, the ground for internal conflict was prepared by the dual morality, the contradiction between the normative and real personality type. Today, the value system of the Russians combines social orientation and individualism. The Russian society split according to typological domination is also revealed in a range of studies. According to the data of national surveys of the Institute of Sociology of the Russian Academy of Sciences (2015), in Russian society there are two groups, conventionally designated as "the activists" and "the passives". The activists are those who take responsibility for their lives and achieve happiness: ready to fight for their interests and rights (52%), able to do without the help of the state, depending only on themselves (45%), aims to live differently from others, to stand out from the general mass (41%). "Passive" side is represented by those who adapt their life to reality (48%), feel dependent on the state (55%), want to live fitting in (58%) (Sedova, 2016). It is easy to see that both groups today practically counterbalance each other.

However, analysis of the dynamics in life purposes change in recent years reflects a cautious shift towards activist life position, values of self-esteem and individualism (Tihonova, 2012). Along with maintaining a high level of macroidentity, including dreams of social justice, there are such process as gradual erosion of national identity, disappearance of that personality type and de-legitimization of those social norms on which the Russian civilizational project was previously built (Tihonova, 2015).

Succeeding in the life strategies of self-sufficient people, focused on their own achievements, sometimes requires getting over one's moral norms; this actualizes the moral field of social relations. The majority of "self-sufficient" Russians (58%) while solving the dilemma "success or conscience", sacrifice their independence and recognize the need for the state regulation of favorable morality and ethics climate in society (Gorshkov, Sedova, 2015). As for the worldview of activists, or self-sufficient citizens, it relies, first of all, on the internal locus of control, responsibility for their own successes and failures, attitudes

towards innovative mindset and possible changes. Thus, the growth of these attitudes effect, distribution into broader social groups mean a significant dynamics of personal and social changes.

The relevant approach to the study of the modern Russian personality type and its dynamic characteristics combines sociocultural and semio-psychological aspects, which reveal the fundamentals and specifics of the new values and patterns of personal typology preservation, inhibition and refraction in current competitive environment of Russian society. In these terms, the problem of the lack of uniform symbolic and semantic field is very important, as it is connected with social relations mobility, ongoing risk and complex processes in semio-psychological space. The modern Russian as a representative of the postindustrial society constantly deals with risk, which is a cause of his frequent panic state and which appeals to the archetypes of consciousness. While as the traditional society member could rely on collective assistance, in an individualized society, a person had to rely on himself. Passing through crises in dynamic time contributes to the fact that the crisis consciousness becomes cyclical. Vdovushkina believes that choosing a relevant archetype in certain situation is an unconscious process utilizing the resonance principle. That archetypic matrix which structure of action is closest to the structure of the situation, appears to be the most effective. The synergetic approach to the phenomenon of human perception mediated by archetypal constructs, makes it possible to construct a synergetic model of human mentality, and, hence, to determine the mechanisms of preferences formation. This allows one to assume the complex structure of archetypes in terms of their significance for the consciousness transformation and behavior regulation. Thus, the distinctive feature of current archetype structures is the absence of a consolidating center: previously the Mother archetype took central stage, now every Hero is actual (Vdovushkina, 2009). Vdovushkina identifies four groups of archetypes that participate in resonant states accompanying the interchange between the archetypal content of culture and its mental space: these are axial, vector, consolidating and chaotic archetypes. The failure of the axial archetypal group, which can be observed today, the insufficient support of consolidators cause a state of instability, the inability to "catch up" and process new meanings. In this case, a return to traditional matrices becomes reasonable, the Hero's problem requires revision, and the need for constructing a centering axial element becomes particularly important.

## **6. Findings**

The study of the personality type transformation processes of the Russian society representatives allows one to assume its transient nature, caused by both preservation and strong effect of the Soviet era archetypes, and emergence of new individualistic features. Traces of instability reveal in widespread distrust, in the sense of the future insecurity, in uncoordinated institutional changes, in an almost identical proportion of liberal-democratic and authoritarian-conservative attitudes in the image of power. Changes in the value system that keep up with the global processes of values modernization are based on the contradiction between the norm and the reality, having existed in the Soviet era. Today this is reflected in the dynamic co-existence of a collectivist and individualistic orientation that facilitates the formation of passive and active life positions, a characteristic of expectation of the state assistance or independence from it. Passive attitude is also caused by the unreadiness for the assigned task to represent the market type of a strong hero – individualist, pursuing clear goals, which would lead to personal success. Besides,

in the current situation, the lack of uniform symbolic and semantic field plays an important role: previous heroes are gone, and there is no one to take them over. So, in the resonant connection of the structural elements of semio-psychological space, a system of archetypes breaks down, what causes confusion and inability to master new meanings of reality.

## 7. Conclusion

In conclusion, it should be emphasized that the process of personal transformation comes along with system-wide changes in Russian society. A new personality type formation is the most important problem of the socialization process, ensuring the inclusion of the individual oneself into creating living conditions for his development within the framework of a dynamic society. The clearly determined image of the future is also of fundamental significance in creating opportunities for activity. These and other issues in their interrelation require that modern sociological science paid close attention to them, in the continuation of the assigned by Y. Levada research line of personality type changes that occur with Russian people.

## References

- Bysov, L.G. (2015). Conservative trend in modern Russian society - origins, content and prospects. *Social Sciences and Modernity*, 4, 25-49
- Fromm, E. (2006). *Healthy Society*. Moscow: AST MOSCOW: THE KEEPER
- Gorshkov, M.K., Sedova N.N. (2015). "Self-sufficient" Russians and their life priorities *Sociological Studies*, 12, 4-16.
- Gorshkov, M.K. (2016). Russian society in crisis development context: contextual approach. *Sociological Studies*, 12, 26-34.
- Grushin, B.A. (2001) *Four lives of Russia in the mirror of public opinion polls. Essays on the mass consciousness of Russians of the times of Khrushchev, Brezhnev, Gorbachev and Yeltsin in 4 books. Life is the 1st. "The Epoch of Khrushchev."* M: Progress-Tradition.
- Gudkov, L.D. (2007). "Soviet man" in the sociology of Yuri Levada. *Social Sciences and Modernity*, 6, 16-30.
- Gudkov, L.D., Dubin, A.G., & Levinson, A.G. (2009). The Photobot of the Russian Philistine. *The World of Russia*, 2, 22-23. Retrieved from [http://www.civisbook.ru/files/File/Gudkov\\_Dubin.pdf](http://www.civisbook.ru/files/File/Gudkov_Dubin.pdf)
- Inglehart R., Welzel K. (2011) *Modernization, cultural change and democracy*. M.: New publishing house.
- Levada, Y.A.(Eds.). (1993). *Soviet simple man: the experience of social portrait at the turn of the 90's*. M.: Publishing house "World Ocean".
- Magaril, S.A. (2014). Courage to know (On the book of IG Yakovenko "Cognition of Russia: Civilization Analysis"). *Sociological Studies*, 2, 146-151.
- Magun, W., Rudnev, M, & Schmidt, P. (2015). European value typology and basic values of Russians. *Journal of Public Opinion*, 3-4 (121), 74 -94.
- Public opinion-2015* (2016). Moscow: Levada-Centre. Retrieved from <http://www.levada.ru/sbornik-obshhestvennoe-mnenie/obshhestvennoe-mnenie-2015>
- Ruthevich, E.D. (1993) Typology of a social nature D. Riesman. *Sociological Studies*, 3, 118-121.
- Sedova, N.N. (2016) Life goals and strategies of Russians: the context of passionarity. *Sociological Journal*, 2, 73-91. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.19181/socjour.2016.22.2.4260>
- Sikevich, Z.W. (2016). Dynamics of the "image" of the past and present in the representations of residents of St. Petersburg. *Sociological Studies*, 3, 88-97.
- Shestopal, E.B. (2015). A quarter of a century of political reforms in Russia from the point of view of psychology. *Polis. Political Studies*, 1, 136-150 DOI: 10.17976/jpps/2015.01.

- Tihonova, N.E. (2012). Features of "Russian modernists" and prospects of cultural dynamics of Russia. *Social Sciences and Modernity*, 2, 38–52.
- Tihonova, N.E. (2015) Dreams of Russians "About Society" and "About Me": can we talk about a special Russian civilizational project? *Social Sciences and Modernity*, 1, 52-63.
- Toshchenko, G.T. (2016). Life world and its meanings. *Sociological Studies*, 1, 6-17.
- Toshchenko, G.T (2017). Injury of society: between evolution and revolution (invitation to debate). *Polis. Political Studies*, 1, 70-84. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.17976/jpps/2017.01.07>
- Vdovushkina, N.S. (2009). Archetype and the meaning of culture. *News of the University of Saratov. New series. Series of Philosophy, Psychology. Pedagogy*, 4, 3-8.
- Vinogradova, E. (2015, September 17). Opinion: About the Weird Values. *Vedomosti*. Retrieved from <http://www.vedomosti.ru/lifestyle/2015/09/17/609145-portret-srednestichesticheskogo-rossiyaninya-ochen-protivorechiv/>
- Vosmitel, A.A. (2002). Diversification of the way of life (Ways and life styles in the post-Soviet social space). *The World of Russia*, 11, 1, 97-113.
- Welzel, C., Inglehart, R., & Klingemann, H.-D. (2003). *The Theory of Human Development: A Cross-Cultural Analysis*. *European Journal of Political Research*, 42, 341–380.
- Yakovenko, I.G. (2012). *Cognition of Russia. Civilizational analysis*. Moscow: ROSSPEN.