

# General Psychology

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## Disparity of the generations' world view as an indicator of the transformation of mentality<sup>1</sup>

### Introduction

Nowadays the social-cultural situation has resulted in differentiation of society, where one can see differences in points of view, values, opinions and inner goals connected with both the evaluation of the economic, political, ideological situation of society and those concerned with ethics, moral standards and values. It is possible to speak about not just common stratification of society according to the criteria rich-poor, communist-socialist, democrat-liberal, etcetera: these oppositions will be listed later. Some other tendencies are revealing themselves which prove that social stratification is caused by changing traditional points of view and the appearance of a new, different understanding of life, one's role in it, common values, moral standards and behavioral models. Disparity of views among generations is a characteristic feature of practically any period of time. Opposition between parents and their children has become a classical one. We pay attention not only to this aspect of the life cycle of society and the development of generations. We are interested in gaps in the acceptance of common, traditional for the culture points of view, standards and values which, in our opinion, give evidence of the initial changing of world view, common for people.

Today it can be declared that relations between generations have been taking different forms. Recent psychological research [4, 5, 15] proves a modern individual is aiming for the future, consigning the past to oblivion. Consequently there is a problem of controlling the transformation processes in world view which are the basis of the generations' mentality. Psychology has not yet established methodological instruments of measuring the details of changes in the generations' mentality. But it can fix some components of the mentality by using already known methods. Since we understand mentality as an ordinary layer of collective consciousness with the generations' world view as its basis, it is possible that mentality transformation starts just from changes in the generations' world view. At the same time, there is no answer to the question of what particularly is changing in the world view.

The topicality of the problems mentioned above determined the purposes of the present research which are the following – to single out parameters of the

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<sup>1</sup> The research is carried out by financial support of RSSF in the frameworks of science-researching project of RSSF (Way of thinking of objects of Russian mentality in constantly changing world), project № 05-06-06420a

generations' world view and to carry out a comparative analysis, reflecting its dynamic occurrences.

### **World view of generations**

Regarding the problem of dynamics of world view, the following aspects can be mentioned – analysing the world view from its hierarchical, structural and functional perspectives taking into account situational moments.

A. N. Leontjev was among the first who considered the problem of world view. He came to the conclusion that “a view, or picture of the world, consists not of representation but represented” and added in brackets the point which was very important for perceiving the notion of “world view” – “represented, reflected can be revealed only by reflection” [8; 261]. We see that intersystem connections forming the subject world are revealed to a human being through notions with meaning “the measuring of intersystem connections of the objective, subject world” [8; c.254]. Consequently, the world view of an individual consists of three dimensions of space, time and meanings. So, A. N. Leontjev considered investigation of the world image to be the main problem of the whole science of psychology. In fact, in his small article, he singled out and revealed the main directions of the further development of psychology in the frames of world view conception.

S. D. Smirnov investigates the question of stratification of world view into nuclear and surface layers. Nuclear structures of world view include reflection on the super-sensual qualities of the subject, presented as a system of socially worked out notions which an individual masters during his life. Surface structures of the world view are “a sensually shaped picture of external reality” [18; c.150].

The idea of layers, structures or levels of organization of world view found its further development in works of many scientists who presented their own perceptions of this problem. The following trends of investigation of this problem can be singled out. Firstly, psycho-semantic: it began with the works of E.Y.Artemjeva [1] and then was developed by the investigations of V.P. Petrenko, Y.K. Strelkova, V.P. Serkina [17] etc. Secondly, psycho-energetic trend or V.E.Klochko's theory of psychological systems [7], developed by works of O.M.Krasnorjadceva, A.K. Belousova etc. Thirdly, D.A. Leontjev's trend of sense psychology [10]. Though each of these trends differs in its conceptual basis, they all, in fact, develop the main ideas of D.A. Leontjev.

E.Y. Artemjeva distinguishes three layers of world view: 1) perceptive world characterizing surface structures of world view; 2) layer of immodal structures or “world view in the narrow sense”, layer corresponding to nuclear, depth structures; 3) semantic layer or picture of the world [1].

D.A. Leontjev [10] distinguishes: 1) world view that corresponds to E.Y.Artemjeva's perceptive world; 2) psychological mechanisms of view creating; 3) mechanisms of comprehending with the semantic layer of subjective experience, corresponding to this structure; 4) one's inner world as a system of fixed meanings of significant objects and phenomena as well as individual values; 5) reflection proper [10].

V.E. Klochko develops the notion of world view, considering it through its correlation with objective, real, subject bearer presented by the human world. He

distinguishes three layers in the progress of consciousness: 1) subject one, reflecting the surrounding world of subjects, which are expressed by the word; 2) sense one, comprising already formed senses as corresponding to actual needs and possibilities of an individual; 3) value one, supposing getting from the world of culture some ideal forms of moral principles of life, which then determine the behavior and life of an individual [7].

O.M. Krasnorjadceva defines the correlation of the notions “psychological situation” and world view: world view is more stable and complete [6]. World view structure consists of both representations and psychological situations composed of active and actual parts of world view. (O.M. Krasnorjadceva, 1997) [6]. A.K. Belousova distinguishes two spheres of psychological situation as an actual part of world view: value-sense structure of psychological situation as “set ahead”, actually arising, active and functioning sphere of world view, its “first line”, and its potentially active sphere.

In this connection it is worth noting S.V. Lurje’s conception (1997, 2003) of the “central part” of culture [12]. The centre defines the aggregation of values and beliefs which compose the nature of mentality which is sacred for each culture. This core is a unique one and expresses some kind of general content. Two causes provoke changing of the world view: 1) in consequence of loss of adaptive features of the world picture; 2) when society changes its dominant values. “When the picture of the world changes, a new transfer of cultural constants takes place as well as the crystallization of new modes of tradition around new significant objects” [12; 597].

In this connection it is possible to suppose that mentality structure and world view is comprised of active (“central part of culture”) and also potentially active spheres. In this case, transformation of mentality concerns the very potential active part of world view. Just in this part re-comprehending and re-evaluation of the psychological situation occurs which leads to forming actually active parts of the world view, information about which goes from the periphery to the central parts.

So, there can be the following conclusion in A.A. Leontjev’s words (2003): “world view, as psychologists interpret it today, is a reflection of the subject world in a state of mind of an individual, mediated by subject meanings and by corresponding cognitive schemes and yielding to conscious reflection” [9; 268]. According to this point of view, world view serves as an orienting basis for the vital activity of an individual.

V.P. Serkin (2004) notes that world view becomes the product of consciousness due to “constant transformation of sensual forms of consciousness into meanings and senses” [17; 64].

Generalizing what has been said above, we can suppose that world view is a psychological construct. It has a complicated multilevel structure which can be estimated first from a position of its content, as comprising representations, evaluations, senses, values; second, from a position of its dynamics as movement to and from the periphery; third, from functional positions, as a system serving the way of life of generations. World view can be also presented as a product of human activity, as a result of the mastery of the environment, and its perception, understanding, and interpretation of behavior patterns arising.

Then world view can be presented in a structure of mentality as a multilevel formation. The main unit of the periphery of world view is the psychological situation in which an individual finds himself “here and now” or situations in which he found himself in the past. Mesalevel of world view consists of cultural and personal senses of an individual. The deep level of world view is presented by archetypical and immodal forms.

Analysis of the problems of world view is of great importance for us as we need to understand the main mechanisms which cause its changing and set in motion the whole system of mentality. Analysis of this problem is also important because it is necessary to solve not only in a theoretical plan the problem of mechanisms and the specific character of mentality transformation, but also in an applied, specific-methodical plan to single out parameters of measuring world view, changes of which can be regarded as criteria for its transformation.

Changes of world view are important components of mentality transformation. Based on information contained in literature, the following characteristic features of world view can be pointed out: hierarchy of representations of social community; vector of direction (to a group or oneself); representations of value orientations towards world view; mobility or static nature of forms presented in world view ; level of abstraction; position of one’s own self which defines identification; characteristic way of thinking; abstract character of the picture; components of the actual picture; level of complexity of the picture; sense components. It is obvious that many of these characteristic features can be measured and that is why they can be evaluated in an empirical way.

To a certain extent, changes of these characteristic features from generation to generation characterize the dynamics of different components of mentality. In a number of works there are evaluations of some of the above-mentioned depictions of the world image of different generations. So, according to N.M. Lebedeva, in modern Russian society the significance of global social categories, connected with conceptions (civic, ideological etc.) has been decreasing; but the significance of specific, real categories (gender, age, profession, level of income) has been increasing [11]. S.A. Litvina, O.I. Muravjeva (2004) compared the pattern of the aims of young and mature people, defining tendencies of world image [13]. As a result, the authors have proved that younger people are less inclined to demonstrate a pattern generated in regard to political authorities than elders with secondary education, married and having children. Research of American scientists revealed that mind settings of mature people were formed at youth by socialism and have not undergone any changes. D.A. Leonjev (2004) compared “old” and “new” ways of thinking which determine the thinking of generations. In the “old” world, stability is primary and absolute; in a “new” world, change and movement are primary. With regard to value aspect, “old” way of thinking calls to value uniformity, whereas “new” one – to pluralism of possible value ideals [10].

Having found in researches individual tendencies of self-identification, many authors stress that this tendency can have a pernicious result on inter-generational relations. I. Klimov, S.G. Klimova, V.V. Muratov ascertain that any other individual ceases being an absolute value, when environment is regarded as hostile, a crisis of identity and crisis of communication take place. The social circle of self-

identification narrows to small groups [5]. Inselfing of generations is a significant parameter of mentality transformation.

Generalizing the results of the above-mentioned investigations, it is necessary to single out the main points of differences between the mentality of young and mature people on the following criteria: on a construct individualism – collectivism, paternalism, way of thinking, value understandings, identification peculiarities, style of interrelation, social status. We supposed that the world view of generations differs in criteria presented in a generalized form in table 1. In order to investigate “gaps” and “disparities” of mentality, we used the remotest generations: youth and pensioners. Below there are the results of diagnostic investigation of world view as a constituent of the mentality of two generations.

In order to testify this supposition, an investigation was conducted. This defined the methods applied: “Picture of the world” (E.S.Romanova) [16; 208], semantic differential (Osgood) of world picture [17; 160].

The selection was composed of 281 individuals: students of Rostov-on-Don institutions of higher education (among them 72 men and 75 women, aged 18-25) and pensioners (among them 62 men and 72 women aged 65-80). The investigation took place in February, 2005.

*Table 1.  
Comparing of characteristic features of world view by youths and pensioners*

Nº	Characteristic features	World view of pensioners	World view of youth
1.	Direction of value understandings	Collectivism	Individualism
2.	Peculiarities of abstracting	Concretizing	Abstraction
3.	Dynamics of forms	Static	Dynamic
4.	Personification of image of the self	Representation of one's own self is weak	Representation of one's own self is strong
5.	Level of rational way of thinking	Low level of rationality	High level of rationality
6.	Level of creativeness	Realism	Creation
7.	Themes of the picture	Picture of the nearest surroundings	Normative, planetarium
8.	Level of complexity	Complicated, subjective	Complicated, laconic

The above listed parameters characterize two sides of the world view. The first side is connected with projection of world view different characteristics of the self image of an individual which reveals itself in such parameters as direction of values, understandings, personification of self image, level of rational way of thinking, level of creativeness. The second side characterizes

individual-psychological peculiarities of progress of consciousness structure, presented by peculiarities of categorization of surroundings by an individual (peculiarities of abstraction, level of complexity, dynamics of form, and themes of the picture). Proceeding from the results of the projective method “Picture of the world”, we evaluated the picture of world view by pensioners and youth according to the following parameters: collectivism-individualism, concretizing-abstraction, static-dynamic, rationality-irrationality, there is somebody in the picture-there is nobody in the picture. The comparative analysis of world view of youth and pensioners displays the existence of obvious differences, characterizing the originality of forming a world view as listed above.

The world view of youth is characterized by the following peculiarities: from the side of self-representation - individualism, high level of both “self” representation and rationality, creation. From the side of categorization of the surroundings – normative picture of the world, abstraction, dynamic, complicated, laconic. For the world view of pensioners, the characteristic features are the following: from the side of self-representation – collectivism, low level of both “self” representation and rationality, realism. From the side of categorization of the surroundings – picture of the nearest surroundings, concrete, static, complicated, subjective.

Interpreting the results, it can be stated that from the side of self representation by youth – the self forms some kind of centre of the world view. Youth is concentrated on the problems of the self that causes a high level of rationality, individualism and direction to realization of the self in practice (creation), i.e. the world is considered to be a place where it is possible to realize one’s self through creation. Reflection of surroundings is connected with it. The world is reflected for youth as a dynamic one, though the vision of it is laconic and abstract. This world, abstract and not structured yet, has not got the subject status yet and has not changed for youth into the real-life world. Pensioners, from the perspective of self representation, one can see different. The self is transferred from the focus to the periphery; they are not anxious about the problems of one’s self (weak representation of I). One can observe rather directing at other people – collectivism together with a low level of rationality.

For pensioners, the vital world includes the nearest environment, therefore the world is concrete, subject, constant (static) and true to real life. In this connection, it is possible to allocate two defining lines of distinctions of an image of the world of youth and pensioners: strong-weak self and the dynamic-static nature of an image of the world. A strong self is focused in the center of an image of the world, shown in the dynamism of an image of the world, as displaying the general incentive, dynamic, developing tendencies inherent in youth. The weak self is poorly presented in the image of the world, projected in the stable, constant, concrete world consisting of the nearest environment. The vital world of pensioners is, first of all, their nearest environment in which the self is presented (collectivism).

In other words, these factors lead to the following picture:

Youth	
Women	Man
Collectivism	Individualism
Concreteness	Concreteness
Static character	Static
Rationality	Rationality
There is no person in a picture	There is no person in a picture
Pensioners	
Women	Man
Collectivism	Collectivism
Abstraction	Abstraction
Static character	Dynamic
Rationality	Rationality
The person in a picture	The Person in a picture

The analysis of results has found distinctions in each group. In the group of youths, the most typical distinctions were on parameter orientations (collectivism-individualism): for women, collectivism is preferable; for men individualism. Most likely, in the group of men, individual values and infringement of traditions will be shown in coldness of attitude. Women are inclined to conformism, exaggerating the value of the group, and adhering to traditions. Thus, the image of the world of youth and pensioners differs on essential parameters and also there are some inter-sexual differences inside each group. The given distinctions, in our opinion, testify to distinct archetypes and structures describing deep layers of mentality. We believe that the archetypes, the deep structures of mentality which are directly not reflected by the person, are found out in projective techniques. The received distinction of parameters, in our opinion, testifies to a break in the formation of an invariant, constant component of an image of the world, the given culture similar for representatives, i.e. a mismatch in the formation of the general, for all generations, deep archetype structures of mentality.

For a deepening of representations about the semantic components and constructions of semantic space of an image of the world, the technique of semantic differential included 25 scales has been adopted. The sample of examinees has been taken from students of high schools of Rostov-on-Don - 270 people (100 girls and 170 young men) aged 18 to 25 years (March-April, 2005).

On the received factorial matrix which included 3 factors of an image of the world, the estimation of the contribution of each factor in the general dispersion for groups of men and women separately for youth has been analysed.

Let's consider the results of the research. At факторизации results оценивании the image of the world groups of students and group of pensioners obtain the following data, in general, on the group:

Factorial analysis (own number 0.95) (histogram 5).

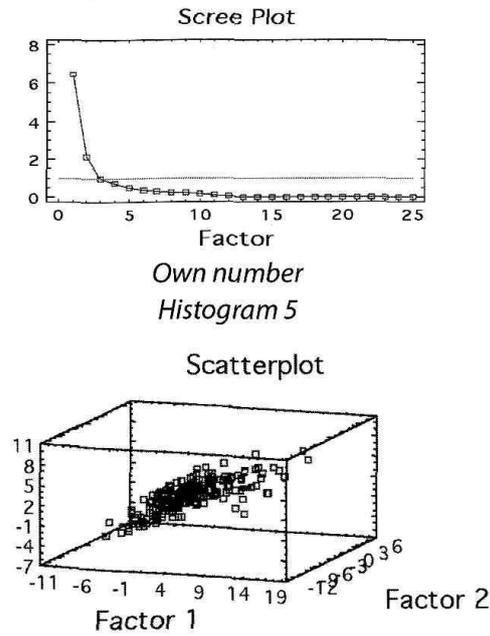


Fig. 1  
Field of dispersion of factors

The configuration of a field testifies to strong correlation of all three significant factors (fig. 1). Three factors make about 91 %. Therefore in the subsequent operation of rotation of factors on a method варимакс 3 factors (histogram 5) have been chosen.

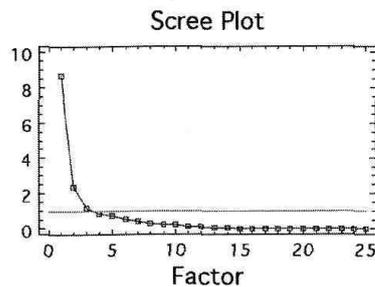
Significant 3 factors.

Scales of 1 factor are loaded by supervision dear (0.53), fast (0.57), cheerful (0.59), favourite (0.72), fresh (0.71), clever (0.73) and sharp (0.62). The first factor we shall define as pleasant, protogenic.

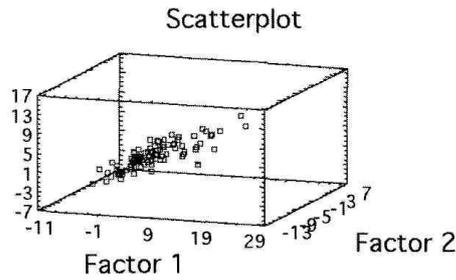
Scales 2 factors are loaded by supervision: strained (0.63), complex (0.64).

Scales 3 factors are loaded by supervision: light (-0.59).

Sample of women. Factorial analysis (own number 0.95) (Histogram 6).



Field of dispersion of factors  
Histogram 6



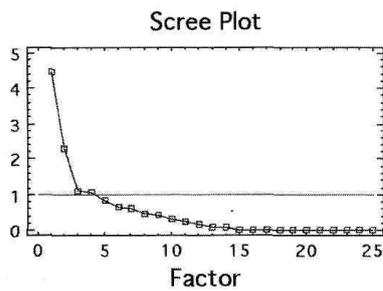
*Fig. 2*  
*Field of dispersion of factors*

The configuration of a field (fig. 2) testifies to a strong correlation of all three significant factors. Scales of 1 factor are loaded by supervision: big (0.52), active (0.58), pleasant (-0.57), hot (0.68), native (0.55), road (0.66), fast (0.68), cheerful (0.64), favourite (0.70), fresh (0.77), clever (0.86), sharp (0.72), pure (0.57).

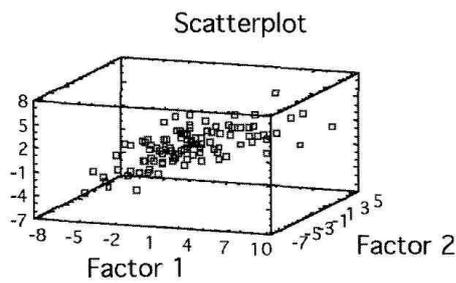
Scale 2 factors: strained (0.74), complex (0.60), heavy (0.65), chaotic (-0.62), firm (0.50).

Scale 3 factors: kind (-0.52).

*Sample of men. Factorial analysis (own number 0.95) Histogram 7.*



*Histogram 7*



*Fig. 3*  
*Field of dispersion of factors*

The configuration of a field testifies to a strong correlation of all three significant factors (Fig. 3). Significant 3 factors.

Scales of 1 factor: pleasant (-0.64), hot (0.66), favourite (0.77), fresh (0.54), clever (0.59), sharp (0.51), stupid (0.45).

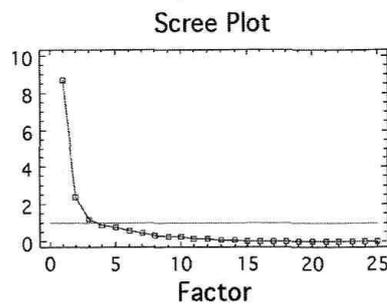
Scale 2 factors: malicious (0.59).

Scale 3 factors: joyful (0.48).

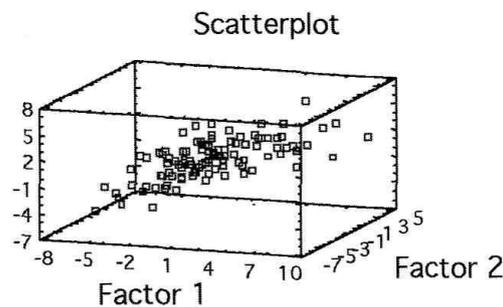
Men have not allocated the attitude to an image of the world, have not emphasized its activity, and accented exclusively estimations of an image of the world. And, five positive estimations were designated: pleasant, favourite, fresh, clever, joyful; and four negative estimations: hot, sharp, stupid, malicious.

*Sample of pensioners. Factorial analysis (own number 0.95) Histogram 8.*

*Field of dispersion of factors*



*Histogram 8*



*Fig. 4*

*Field of dispersion of factors*

The configuration of a field (fig. 4) testifies to a strong correlation of all three significant factors. Significant 4 factors (histogram 7).

Scales of 1 factor: pleasant (-0.64), hot (0.66), favourite (0.77), fresh (0.54), clever (0.59), sharp (0.51), stupid unlike women here both of an attribute are equivalent (0.70).

Scale 2 factors: malicious (-0.59), complex (0.57), strained (0.53), heavy (0.49), pure (0.47).

Scale 3 factors: joyful (0.48).

Scale 4 factors: fresh (0.44).

### **Conclusions:**

In spite of the fact that кластерный the analysis has not allowed to allocate group to the sexual attribute, separate processing of the sample of men has shown essential differences of this sample, both from the general, and from the sample of women.

The received results by both techniques will not only be coordinated, but they also supplement each other. The technique « the Picture of the world » reflects deep, archetypal components of an image of the world, and a technique of semantic differential semantic components.

For girls the image of the world contacts representations about ideal love (pleasant, cheerful, native, dear, favourite, hot, fresh, clever, sharp, fast, strong, big, active, pure), complexities and force (strained, complex, heavy, chaotic, firm), and happiness (kind). The space of an image of the world for young women is an integrated scale of representation of the world of ideal love (pleasant, cheerful, native, dear, favourite, hot, fresh, clever, sharp, fast, strong, big, active, pure), an integrated scale of representation of the world as complex way-obstacle-formation (strained, complex, heavy, chaotic, firm), a scale of representation of the world kind. The image of the world for girls is a space of love, force (a heavy way) and pleasures (expectation of happiness).

The space of an image of the world for young men is also трёхмерно, but more unequivocal, than for women. The space of an image of the world for them is an integrated scale of representation of the world of terrestrial love (favourite, pleasant, fresh, hot, clever, roofing felts sharp, roofing felts stupid), a scale of representation of the world malicious (object of struggle, rivalry), a scale of representation of the world joyful (expectation of happiness). The image of the world for them is a space of love, struggle and happiness (pleasure).

The space of an image of the world for pensioners is an integrated scale of representation of the world of gone through love (favourite, pleasant, fresh, hot, clever, roofing felts sharp, roofing felts stupid), an integrated scale of representation of the world in a heavy way, a scale of representation of the world that is unclear and disturbing, with no expectation of happiness, a scale of representation of the world as strong and chaotic.

If to include in mentality ways of perception of the world it is visible that the perception of an image of the world by pensioners differs in comparison with youth: in changes of dimensions of semantic space (increase in the number of categories of consciousness), and in changes of the maintenance of categories-factors. In it, with some degree of accuracy, it is possible to prove that there was a transformation of traditional mentality, namely the perception of an image of the world has changed, as well as the world has changed.

It is important to note, that studying the scales of measurement (there were 25) has shown that for all, both young and pensioners, the image of the world is defined basically by representations about the world, instead of its knowledge. It can testify to dominating influence of cultural rules and norms, and conservatism of an image of the world by the person.

Thus, the research carried out into the features of an image of the world of various generations - youth and pensioners - has revealed the presence of essential

distinctions which are shown on a deep, archetype level and at a superficial level. Distinction of images of the world of generations leads to transformations and disparity of attitudes between generations that can be of interest to psychologists and social workers.

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