

## **Power, attraction, and reference in macrolevel social relations: An analysis of closed groups and closed societies based on the psychology of the “Soviet person” and the “post-Soviet person”**

Nadezhda K. Radina<sup>a\*</sup>, Mariia V. Koskina<sup>b</sup>

<sup>a</sup>*Department of Social Sciences, National Research University Higher School of Economics, Nizhny Novgorod, Russia*

<sup>b</sup>*Department of History, State University of New York at Binghamton, Binghamton, USA*

\*Corresponding author. E-mail: rasv@yandex.ru

In this article the features of social-relationship systems are analyzed based on the data from a sociopsychological empirical study conducted in two stages (2002 and 2014) on a large sample with the help of G. Kelly's Repertory Grid Technique. A. V. Petrovsky's three-factor interpersonal-relationships model as interpreted for *closed groups* by M. Yu. Kondratev and the concept of the *closed society* as described by Karl Popper provide the foundation for the theoretical hypothesis we tested. The empirical data obtained in 2002 came from 391 participants of different ages who were living in provincial towns in the Nizhny Novgorod region. The elderly respondents (232 people) had lived almost all their lives under the Soviet regime; the middle-aged respondents (159 people) got their education and started their careers in the USSR. Soviet society is considered to be closed because of its authoritarian and collectivist nature, static social structure, and dogmatic ideology. It is argued that both closed societies and closed groups are characterized by a rigid hierarchical social structure, isolation from other systems, and depersonalization of social relations. We have proved that members of a closed group and citizens of a closed society have similar social-relationship matrices.

**Keywords:** closed group, closed society, Soviet society, post-Soviet society, Repertory Grid Technique, Petrovsky's three-factor model, interpersonal relations, social structure

**In memory of M. Yu. Kondratev**

### **Introduction**

Usually in the social sciences empirical studies with large samples are conducted to solve some applied problem, such as describing and explaining a new social reality. In this article, a relatively rare strategy is employed based on analysis of a large array of empirical data gathered exclusively for the purpose of verifying a theoretical

hypothesis built on the ideas of A. V. Petrovsky about the specific nature of interpersonal relationships in a closed group. These ideas were pursued by his followers, namely by M. Yu. Kondratev with his colleagues and graduate students. The history of their study goes back to the 1990s, when Russian social psychology, which was experiencing drastic social and economic transformations together with all of Russian society, was testing new ideas and terms (most often suggested by foreign colleagues). Among the new concepts and ideas was the concept of the *closed society*, which was used primarily by philosophers and political scientists to describe Soviet totalitarian society.

### ***Closed society***

The concept of open and closed societies has already for many years generated the interest of political scientists, social scientists, and even economists, and it still attracts the attention of researchers. The appeal of this concept can be explained by the fact that the modern world continues to be haunted by totalitarianism in its various manifestations and by other social problems that were described by Karl Popper, the main developer of the idea of the open society, in *The Open Society and Its Enemies* (1945/2013). As Campbell (1974) puts it, the erosion of personal liberties encourages scholars to investigate the roots of the “manipulative state.” It is argued, however, that the idea of the closed–open–society dichotomy was first proposed by the Anglo-American poet W. H. Auden as it was mentioned in his essay “Criticism in a Mass Society” (1941). This idea was thoroughly elaborated for the first time only in *The Two Sources of Morality and Religion*, written by H. Bergson in 1932 (1932/1977).

Both Bergson and Popper stated that all societies are fundamentally closed systems and tend to develop in the direction of the open type (Bergson, 1932/1977; Popper, 1945/2013). Moreover, Popper postulated that all individuals are born (no matter when or where) with the innate desire to live in a closed society. He compares the closed society with an organism because it is similar to a herd or a tribe whose members are held together by semi-biological ties (kinship, common efforts, common dangers). Consequently, in a closed society each member is thought to be just a part of the system, sharing the community’s common values, rules, and traditions. This type of society is ruled by superstitions and taboos that leave no place for anyone’s critical opinion; no civil rights are guaranteed, and most decisions are taken “behind closed doors” (Parel, 1982). Popper characterized closed societies as segregated, economically autonomous, and without cultural contact with other communities. They are occupationally undifferentiated, and all inside activities are governed exclusively by tradition (Polat, 2012). All in all, Popper considered any closed society to be characterized by a static social structure, restricted mobility, the inability to innovate, traditionalism, and a dogmatic authoritarian ideology.

Such a tribal or collectivist society is the opposite of a society in which individuals are confronted with their personal decisions—that is, an open society. An open society has a dynamic social structure, high mobility, the ability to innovate, toleration of criticism, individualism, and a democratic pluralist ideology (Popper, 1945/2013).

Discussions of the closed society necessitated associating this phenomenon with the notion of the *closed group* in social psychology. Thus, in the general theory of systems closed systems are regarded as those that are isolated from the external environ-

ment, and open systems are those that are connected to it. At the same time, closed systems “differ from open ones not as much by the lack of connections with the environment but more by the nature of these connections.... If the basic connections with the environment are fixed...the environment does not make any changes to the system, and the latter depends only on internal relations” (Efimchuk, 2004, p. 66).

### ***Closed group in social psychology***

In Russian social psychology, isolated communities are traditionally studied through Petrovsky’s three-factor model, which was applied by Kondratev to closed groups. The closed group is traditionally viewed through the prism of the monoactivity and monostructuring of problems, through the prism of isolation from external contacts (the necessity to solve all problems only on one’s own and the inability to get rid of the negative emotional charge that is accumulated in the course of limited communication), and through the prism of changes in group structure (Kondratev, 2005). The concept of *isolation* finds its place in both definitions (the broad social definition and the more narrow sociopsychological definition); this feature turns out to mediate relationship quality in closed social systems. This connection pulls the concepts of the closed group and the closed society together; further research us clearly required to question and test this connection.

Petrovsky’s three-factor model, which comprises the factors of attraction, power, and reference, has been rather productive for getting an increasingly deep insight into the specific structure of interpersonal relations in a closed group. Kondratev found that in an open group interpersonal relationships are defined by all three factors (in an open group some members are liked, others are respected, and the authority of still others is recognized), while in a closed group all the factors “stick” together. Attraction and reference in a closed group depend on the factor of power relations — that is, in a closed group those whose status position provides power attract others emotionally and inspire respect. Consequently, in a closed group, intergroup status determines who has to be respected and whom one should like; this determination leads to the depersonalization of interpersonal relationships. Further studies have shown that the hierarchy in a closed group is static and rigid — that is, after one occupies a certain status position in a closed group, it becomes almost impossible to change this position in the future. Kondratev emphasizes that the “excessive polarization of group status” inherent in a closed group “is destructive to the unity of any community” and leads to “the rapid formation of separated and often conflicting subgroups” (Kondratev, 2005, p. 92).

The studies of closed groups conducted by Soviet and, later, Russian psychologists who were followers of Petrovsky were usually focused on either teenage prisoner groups in specialized secure facilities for juveniles (which were fully closed) or teenage groups in orphanages (which were conditionally closed). Nevertheless, many years of studies (Khryascheva, 1976; Kondratev, 2005; 2011, 2012; Vinogradova, 1992) allowed the formulation of the common features that characterize interpersonal relationships in a closed group:

- Monostructuring dominates in closed groups because of their “closedness,” which creates a rigid division between low- and high-status group mem-

bers. This division leads to polarization and, in fact, to the rupture of interpersonal relations between the group strata.

- The status-based characteristics of closed-group members (to be more precise, the fact of their belonging to a particular stratum) provide the grounds for evaluation and identification of the similarities and the differences between the interaction partners.
- Interpersonal relationships in closed groups are shaped by status; in specialized secure facilities for juveniles the predominant “significance formula” of a particular individual looks like this: power (+) — reference (+) — attraction (-). In closed institutions like orphanages the predominant significance formula of an individual looks this way: power (+) — reference (+) — attraction (+).

Petrovsky’s three-factor model applied by Kondratev to closed groups allowed us to identify intergroup processes that were not visible previously. This identification facilitated the analysis of closed groups. When we compare the concepts of a closed society and a closed group we can now assume that the key characteristic that unites them is their rigid hierarchical social structures, in which power mediates the relationships of attraction and reference while relationships between strata are polarized.

Our article thus aims at verifying the hypothesis according to which the members of a closed group (prisoners, children in orphanages) and the citizens belonging to a closed society<sup>1</sup> may have similar features in their interpretive matrices of social relations (a similar perception of the social world). Consequently, the phenomenon of Soviet society (and its successor, post-Soviet society) still exists at the sociopsychological level.

## Method

Our study, which was started in 2002 and continues up until the present time, was based on the idea of common features that can be found both in a closed society and in a closed group. The time period starting from the 1990s is called post-Soviet in Russia; thus, the “post-Soviet Russians” in the early 2000s were middle-aged people, while the pensioners (retired people 60 years old and older) were the “Soviet people,” whose personal development occurred within the framework of Soviet ideology. We suggested that having studied interpersonal relationships at the macrolevel (within the boundaries of the whole society, rather than in a separate contact group) among ordinary Soviet pensioners, we could find the characteristics of “closedness,” as described above. After that, having compared the results for the Soviet pensioners with the results for the middle-aged participants, we would be able to answer the following questions (within the limits of the material under the study):

- Can we argue that a closed society existed in the form of a sociopsychological reality related to the phenomenon of the closed group?
- Is it possible to talk about a fundamental sociopsychological transformation in the attitudes and values of post-Soviet society?

<sup>1</sup> That is, the Soviet Union (Soros, 1995).

- Can we argue that societal social structures are changing and that the Soviet closed society is no longer being reproduced on the sociopsychological level?

Petrovsky's three-factor interpersonal-relationships model as interpreted for the closed groups by Kondratev and the concept of the closed society as described by Popper are the key theories for this study.

In the study were 391 participants: 232 people 60 years old or older (the Soviet pensioners) and 159 middle-aged people; in the total sample, 55% were women and 45% were men.

The Repertory Grid Technique (RGT) was used as the primary method (Fransella, 2003). RGT is based on the Personal Construct Theory of Kelly (1955/1991) it was first used primarily in clinical psychology, but now it is a universal method for externalizing individuals' personal constructs and is used for multidisciplinary research in diverse fields. The technique was traditionally employed by social psychologists to study the structure of interpersonal relationships in a small group, as well as within the framework of the three-factor interpersonal-relationships model. There are three major components in the repertory grid: constructs, elements, and links. Constructs are the units that constitute the system of a personal perception of the world. Elements, as interpreted by the participant, are the subjects that are of interest to the researcher. Links show how a person interprets the elements relative to the constructs and indicates in which way they are similar or different. In this study, the links among the evaluated objects were of paramount importance.

The roles in RGT can be changed to comply with the objectives of the study; we selected 14 roles that, according to the research plan, could reveal the relationships among the participants at the macrolevel (within the society). (For the list of roles see Appendix 1.) The main idea is to include those that would represent all three relationship factors at the macrolevel for the respondent: individuals who have real political power; individuals who are respected and whose influence in society is widely recognized; and individuals who are considered to be attractive by the respondents. We also decided to affiliate the list of the roles with the dichotomous constructs of the "private world" (the world of friends and relatives) and the "public world" (the world of famous people and politicians). In addition, the "regional axis" (capital — region/province) was taken into consideration while choosing the roles.

In line with these requirements, one of the roles was assigned to the participant himself/herself ("you"). Another two roles described the relationships of trust or distrust. One of the roles described the relationships of interest and attraction, and the other one, the relationships of claims and anti-attraction. The roles connected with the relationships of reference were assigned to three objects: famous and influential people at the local, regional, and federal levels. Thus, the relationships of reference ("social referents") were represented at the meso- and macrolevels. Power relations included three role positions as well: "the head of the local administration or the mayor", "the governor," and "the president." The list of roles also includes informal social-network members (the integration of attraction relationships and informal relationships), and two neutral roles belonging to the informal environment of varying degrees of geographical distance.

The respondents were asked to analyze the objects in threes according to the standard RGT application procedure. After the similarities and the differences between the objects were interpreted and articulated, the respondent divided the entire list of objects into two equal parts based on the relevance or irrelevance to the construct, which was used by the respondent to describe the relationships in threes. Thus, all the objects from the list were connected and could be subjected to mathematical processing and analysis (factor analysis, principal component analysis, and varimax rotation based on the distance measures among the data that were used) (Mackay, 1992).

## Results

In this article, we are covering the results of the first stage of our study (the second stage of data collection was finished at the beginning of 2015).

**Table 1.** The social-relationship system in the coordinates of the private space and the public space: the elderly respondents (232 people)

Factor 1-A (factor loadings — 9.2; variance — 9.6%)	Factor 2-A (factor loadings — 7.8; variance — 8.5%)	Factor 3-A (factor loadings — 5.4; variance — 5.8%)	Factor 4-A (factor loadings — 5.0; variance — 5.5%)	Factor 5-A (factor loadings — 4.6; variance — 5.0%)
1_2 (-.56)	1_3 (-.52)	1_11 (.67)	1_14 (-.68)	2_11 (.56)
1_5 (-.58)	1_4 (-.54)	3_11 (.70)	3_14 (-.60)	2_12 (-.55)
2_3 (-.59)	1_8 (-.53)	4_11 (.66)	4_14 (-.61)	2_13 (-.59)
2_4 (-.61)	1_9 (.56)	6_11 (-.56)	6_14 (.73)	5_11 (.51)
2_6 (.58)	1_10 (.56)	8_11 (.59)	8_14 (-.50)	5_12 (-.51)
2_9 (.59)	3_4 (-.56)	9_11 (-.62)	9_14 (.68)	5_13 (-.51)
2_10 (.50)	4_8 (-.60)	10_11 (-.53)	10_14 (.53)	
3_5 (-.61)	4_9 (.59)	11_12 (-.50)	13_14 (.53)	
3_12 (.56)	6_9 (-.56)	11_13 (-.53)		
4_5 (-.64)	6_10 (-.60)			
4_12 (.56)	9_10 (-.57)			
5_6 (.57)				
5_9 (.67)				
5_10 (.55)				
9_12 (-.57)				
9_13 (-.52)				
10_12 (-.60)				

1 — A person you know well and whom you trust. 2 — A person you know well and whom you don't trust. 3 — You yourself. 4 — A person whom you would like to meet with and talk to. 5 — A person who takes too much upon himself/herself. 6 — The head of the administration or the mayor of your town. 7 — A famous and influential person of your town whom you know well. 8 — A relative or acquaintance whom you like who is living in your neighborhood. 9 — The head of the NN region administration (the governor). 10 — A famous and influential person of NN region whom you know better. 11 — A relative or acquaintance whom you are keeping in touch with who is living in NN. 12 — The Russian president. 13 — A famous and influential person from Moscow whom you know better. 14 — A relative or acquaintance whom you are keeping in touch with who is living in Moscow.

The 232 elderly respondents had lived almost all their lives in the Soviet period. During the socioeconomic and political transformations in Russia in the 1990s, they were already retired. We could therefore assume that the respondents who were 60 years and older were still hypothetically Soviet people who had preserved the psychology of the Soviet person (in other words, the period of their most active socialization occurred during Soviet times).

Initially the factor analysis for the elderly sample (unemployed respondents 60 or more years old) gave 25 factors based on the distance measures; after rotation, there were 5 factors (principal component analysis, varimax rotation).

The factor of the *negative evaluation of power* (factor 1-A) (factor loadings — 9.2; variance — 9.6%) involves the relationships among the objects representing both private and public spheres. The elderly respondents evaluated negatively all the public figures from the political-power domain (mayor, governor, and president) as well as the social referents from the regional center. Negative evaluation is complex; it involves both distrust toward all public figures in general and the perception of public figures in the context of negative reference relations (people who are thought to take too much upon themselves and do not meet expectations). The local and capital social referents were absent from the pool of negative evaluation this time.

The factor of *local solidarities or social frontier* (factor 2-A) (factor loadings — 7.8; variance — 8.5%) divides the world into the attractive private sphere, where the relationships of sympathy and acceptance are localized, and the remote public actors, who, as a rule, are representatives of political power at the local and regional levels (mayor/governor, social referent from the regional center).

The frontier factor of *mobile kinship networks within the region* (factor 3-A) (factor loadings — 5.4; variance — 5.8%) can be reproduced for the elderly sample as well. The mobile relative who settled himself/herself in the regional center but who was still included within trusting kinship relationships with the respondent was the starting point here. All the attractive and positively evaluated objects, including the respondents themselves, turned out to be close to the relative from Nizhny Novgorod, while the public figures representing local and regional political power, as well as the regional social referents, were distanced from him/her.

The frontier factor of *mobile kinship networks at the capital/federal level* (factor 4-A) (factor loadings — 5.0; variance — 5.5%) shows that the elderly respondents traditionally considered a mobile relative who settled himself/herself in Moscow to be someone who was “home among strangers” in a geographically and socially remote area. However, this remoteness destroyed kinship networks: in these respondents, relationship schemes of the mobile relative settled in Moscow seemed to get closer to the relationship schemes of politicians and public referents, thus becoming closer to the “others.”

The “*Moscowphobia*” factor (factor 5-A) (factor loadings — 4.6; variance — 5.0%) is related to the frontier factor of the mobile kinship networks by its content. Muscovites belonging to the public domain (social referents from Moscow and the president), who were not trusted by the respondents and who were believed to be too ambitious, were the opposite of the mobile relative from Nizhny Novgorod (the regional center). Despite the geographical distance, this relative managed to

maintain an essential level of trust and modesty. Thus, the Moscowphobia factor comprises not only the center-region dimension but also the private-public.

The world of the respondents, the Soviet pensioners”, can be explained with the theory of fractals (Schroeder, 1991/2009): each part of the world supported the rigid boundary between the private and the public domains, and the public domain was negatively evaluated. In fact, the whole world of the social relations of the elderly respondents consisted of boundaries (between Muscovites and non-Muscovites; between mobile relatives and the world where they settled; among family, friends, and public figures, the subjects of societal influence or political power). On the emotional side, this was a world of distrust toward public figures, especially political leaders. All the factors were actually grouped (stuck) around one — the factor of attraction. The Soviet pensioners liked insiders and definitely did not like the “others” (public figures, politicians).

**Table 2.** The social-relationship system in the coordinates of the private space and the public space: the middle-aged respondents (from 30 to 59 years; 159 people)

<b>Factor 1-B</b> (factor loadings — 8.9; variance — 9.8%)	<b>Factor 2-B</b> (factor loadings — 6.9, the variance — 7.6%)	<b>Factor 3-B</b> (factor loadings — 6.8; variance — 7.5%)	<b>Factor 4-B</b> (factor loadings — 6.2, variance — 6.8%)	<b>Factor 5-B</b> (factor loadings — 4.9, variance — 5.4%)	<b>Factor 6-B</b> (factor loadings — 4.8; variance — 5.3%)
1_4 (-.51)	1_2 (-.76)	1_5 (.74)	1_11 (-.70)	1_14 (-.68)	1_13 (-.76)
1_8 (-.53)	2_3 (-.69)	3_5 (.75)	3_7 (.52)	3_14 (-.70)	3_13 (-.62)
1_9 (.57)	2_4 (-.68)	4_5 (.54)	3_11 (-.65)	4_14 (-.53)	4_13 (-.57)
3_4 (-.59)	2_6 (.76)	5_6 (-.70)	4_11 (-.62)	6_14 (.75)	6_13 (.55)
3_8 (-.52)	2_8 (-.73)	5_9 (-.71)	6_11 (.63)	8_14 (-.72)	8_13 (-.60)
4_8 (-.69)	2_9 (.72)	5_10 (-.54)	8_11 (-.61)	9_14 (.74)	10_13 (.53)
4_9 (.54)	2_10 (.77)	5_12 (-.55)	9_11 (.61)	10_14 (.69)	
4_10 (.58)	2_11 (-.51)	5_13 (-.60)	10_11 (.64)	12_14 (.52)	
6_8 (.58)	2_12 (.64)		11_12 (.56)		
6_9 (-.53)	2_13 (.64)		11_13 (.63)		
6_10 (.62)					
8_10 (.54)					
9_10 (-.62).					

1 — A person you know well and whom you trust. 2 — A person you know well and whom you don't trust. 3 — You yourself. 4 — A person whom you would like to meet with and talk to. 5 — A person who takes too much upon himself/herself. 6 — The head of the administration or the mayor of your town. 7 — A famous and influential person of your town whom you know well. 8 — A relative or acquaintance whom you like who is living in your neighborhood. 9 — The head of the NN region administration (the governor). 10 — A famous and influential person of NN region whom you know better. 11 — A relative or acquaintance whom you are keeping in touch with who is living in NN. 12 — The Russian president. 13 — A famous and influential person from Moscow whom you know better. 14 — A relative or acquaintance whom you are keeping in touch with who is living in Moscow.

The middle-aged participants (in the early 2000s, at the time of the first stage of the research) experienced the period of socioeconomic and political transforma-



tions after they finished school, when they became students, or when they were already employees. Thus, these respondents were highly involved in the socioeconomic transformations of 1990s.

Initially, the factor analysis for the middle-aged sample gave 23 factors based on the distance measures; after rotation there were 6 factors (principal component analysis, varimax rotation).

The factor of *local solidarities or social frontier* (factor 1-B) (factor loadings — 8.9; variance — 9.8%) for the middle-aged respondents divides the world of social relations into the world of attractive, familiar, and trustworthy people and the public world, in which solidarity is shaped by local political authorities and social referents from the regional center.

The *distrust* factor (factor 2-B) (factor loadings — 6.9; variance — 7.6%) divides the world into the public and private domains. Distrust was localized in the public domain (all the social referents except the local referents, as well as all the political-power relations including the president).

The *excessive-ambitions* factor (factor 3-B) (factor loadings — 6.8; variance — 7.5%) divides the world of social relations into modest objects and those with excessive ambitions, following the strict boundaries between private and public. Close, trustworthy people were thought to be modest, while all the public figures from the political and referential domains (except for the local social referents) were regarded as indiscreet.

The frontier factor of *mobile kinship networks within the region* (factor 4-B) (factor loadings — 6.2; variance — 6.8%) demonstrates the ability to interpret the world of social relations through comparison of all the objects from the private and public domains with the mobile relative. Mobile relatives remained part of the kinship network even after leaving their small town or village and adapting to the regional center. They were the opposite of all the prominent figures from the public domain (all the representatives of political power except the president and the social referents).

The frontier factor of the *mobile kinship networks at the capital/federal level* (factor 5-B) (factor loadings — 4.9; variance — 5.4%) traditionally divides the world of social relations by focusing on a mobile relative. Mobile relatives in Moscow appeared to be some kind of barometer indicating the relationship between the public and the private domains. They were comparable to the public figures embodying referentiality and power. However, they were no longer trustworthy or interesting, unlike the objects who belonged to the narrow circle, the private domain, of a respondent.

The new “*Moscowphobia*” factor (factor 6-B) (factor loadings — 4.8; variance — 5.3%) for this group of respondents was based on the meaning of the social referent from the capital. The social referents from Moscow were considered close to representatives of the local authorities and to the social referents from the regional center, while at the same time they were the opposites of the narrow circle of people who were important for the respondents. For the elderly respondents this factor included the representative of central authority (the president). The influential social referents from Moscow played this crucial role in the new Moscowphobia factor.

The middle-aged participants' understanding of social relations at the macrolevel did not differ greatly from the social-relationship understanding of the elderly participants. The middle-aged respondents distanced themselves from the "authority figures" and "metropolitan figures" and most often evaluated power negatively, but did not do so in the same rigid way as the elderly participants did.

## Discussion

Currently, scholars study the characteristics of Soviet and post-Soviet society according to the theory of open/closed society (based on the ideas of Bergson, Popper, and others), as well as within the framework of the ideologized social phenomenon of the Soviet person / Soviet society.

Studies devoted to the concept of a closed society are mainly philosophical, historical, and cultural in nature (Golubev, 2003; Lipovetsky, 2009; Shapovalova, 2012; and others). However, they also explain some aspects of a closed society that are very similar to social phenomena discussed in this article. Thus, Golubev (2003) described the construction of a rigid boundary between the early Soviet Union political elites and the outside world. His findings correspond to the results of our study on the construction of a border between the population and the political elite.

Lipovetsky's research (2009) on the functions of the trickster<sup>1</sup> in the Soviet closed society raises questions about negative communication, which also matches the ideas of social stratification in a closed society and the negative attitude of people toward the higher strata in a social hierarchy. The studies focusing on violence in a closed society do not contradict our findings (Braden, 1980; Nikolayenko, 2007; Parel, 1982; and others); however, they relate only indirectly to phenomena analyzed in this article.

The findings of comparative research that focuses on the mentality of different generations and is based on data from post-Soviet society are not relevant to the approach adopted in our study. This kind of research, in our view, includes an excessive amount of cultural artifacts (Pishchik, 2011).

## Conclusion

According to Kelly's (1955/1991) assumption, each person builds his or her own picture of the world and of the social-relationship system. We examined the common features that unite the systems of social relations in participants of different ages. Our analysis revealed that the studied age groups have a polarized hierarchical social structure. Those who embodied power and reference in this structure were distanced from those whom the respondents found interesting and trustworthy. The respondents demonstrated the evaluation scheme of power relations according to this formula: power (+), reference (+), attraction (-). Furthermore, all the social figures located geographically close to the capital of the country were negatively evaluated in this structure. Russian social psychologists (Kondratev and others) who have been studying closed groups formed by juvenile inmates and children in

<sup>1</sup> The trickster is a mythology archetype, the double of a cultural hero, who has the features of a deceiver behaving illegally.

orphanages argue that this kind of perception of power is typical for closed groups that are strictly isolated (those in prison, for example).

The participants demonstrated the matrix of social relations characteristic of a closed group. Consequently, they reproduced the essential features of a closed society. Indeed, the elderly participants evaluated the representatives of state authority (the mayor, the governor, and the president) most negatively. The middle-aged participants' negative attitude toward power was transformed into distrust. Not only were political figures rejected, but basically all the social referents, the influential people from the center (the regional administrative center and the capital), were rejected. The negative attitude toward influential figures from the capital and the distrust of provincial residents in the capital require further research.

Thus, the phenomenon of the closed society" at the level of the construction of the system of social relations is relevant to the phenomenon of the closed group. The fundamental sociopsychological readjustment in post-Soviet society is gradual, with each new generation partially reproducing the attitudes and the values characteristic of a closed society. We believe that the vectors of the transformation of social relations and the changing attitudes toward power in Russia in the 21st century will be investigated in future research.

### Acknowledgments

This scientific research was carried out with the support of the Russian Foundation for the Humanities 2014/2015, project No. 14-03-00617: "Regional Identity and Socioeconomic Changes (Nizhny Novgorod case 2002–2014)".

### References

- Auden, W. H. (1941). Criticism in a mass society. In D. A. Stauffer (Ed.), *The intent of the critic*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press.
- Bergson, H. (1977). *The two sources of morality and religion*. Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press. (Original work published 1932)
- Braden, W. W. (1980). The rhetoric of a closed society. *Southern Speech Communication Journal*, 45(4), 333–351. doi: 10.1080/10417948009372463
- Campbell, B. (1974). Helvétius and the roots of the "closed" society. *American Political Science Review*, 68(1), 153–168.
- Efimchuk, I. V. (2004). *Sobstvennost kak sotsialnaya sistema* [Property as social system]. Nizhny Novgorod, Russia: NNGU.
- Fransella, F. (2003). *International handbook of personal construct psychology*. Chichester, West Sussex, U.K.: Wiley. doi: 10.1002/0470013370
- Golubev, A. V. (2003). "Mirovaya respublika" ili "zakrytoye obshchestvo" : SSSR v 1920-1930-e gody ["World Republic" of "closed society": USSR in the 1920s and 1930s]. *Rossiya i sovremenniy mir [Russia and the Contemporary World]*, 3, 123–147.
- Kelly, G. (1991). *The psychology of personal constructs*. New York: Routledge. (Original work published 1955)
- Khryasheva, N. Yu. (1976). *Malye gruppy v usloviyakh otnositelnoy sotsialnoy izolyatsii* [Small groups under relative social isolation]. (Abstract of unpublished doctoral dissertation). Leningradsky gosudarstvennyy universitet, Leningrad, Russia. Retrieved from [dissercat.com](http://dissercat.com)

- Kondratev, M. Yu. (2005). *Sotsialnaya psikhologiya zakrytykh obrazovatelnykh uchrezhdeny* [Social psychology of closed educational institutions]. St. Petersburg: Piter.
- Kondratev, M. Yu. (2011). Sotsialnaya psikhologiya zakrytykh obrazovatelnykh uchrezhdeny [Features of intergroup structuring in juvenile offenders' communities under forced isolation]. *Sotsialnaya psikhologiya i obshchestvo* [Social Psychology and Society], 4, 50–70.
- Kondratev, M. Yu. (2012). Sotsialno-psikhologicheskaya spetsifika avtoriteta pedagoga v glazakh raznostatusnykh i raznovozrastnykh vospitannikov zakrytykh obrazovatelnykh uchrezhdeny dlya realnykh i "sotsialnykh" sirot [Socio-psychological specifics of educator's authority from the perspective of orphanage inmates of different statuses and ages]. *Sotsialnaya psikhologiya i obshchestvo* [Social Psychology and Society], 3, 48–57.
- Lipovetsky, M. (2009). Triksster i "zakrytoye" obshchestvo [Trickster and closed society]. *Novoe literaturnoe obozrenie* [New Literature Review], 100, 224–245.
- Mackay, N. (1992). Identification, reflection and correlation: Problems in the bases of repertory grid measures. *International Journal of Personal Construct Psychology*, 5(1), 57–75. doi: 10.1080/08936039208404941
- Nikolayenko, O. (2007). Web cartoons in a closed society: *Animal Farm* as an allegory of post-Communist Belarus. *Political Science and Politics*, 40(2), 307–310. doi: 10.1017/S1049096507070497
- Parel, A. (1982). Values of closed society. *International Political Science Review / Revue Internationale de Science Politique*, 3(2), 230–237. doi: 10.1177/019251218200300210
- Pishchik, V. I. (2011). Pokoleniya: sotsialno-psikhologichesky analiz mentalnosti [Pokoleniya: Socio-psychological analysis of mentality]. *Sotsialnaya psikhologiya i obshchestvo* [Social Psychology and Society], 2, 80–88.
- Polat, M. (2012). Karl Popper's "open" and "closed" society in the context of the European Union. *Human Rights Review*, 2(1), 1–16.
- Popper, K., 2013. *The open society and its enemies*. Vol. 1: *The spell of Plato*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press. (Original work published 1945)
- Shapovalova, N. (2012). *Sotsialnaya pamyat v zakrytykh i otkrytykh obshchestvakh: sotsialno-filosofsky analiz* [Social memory in closed and open societies: Socio-philosophical analysis] (Unpublished doctoral dissertation). Saratov State Technical University, Saratov, Russia. Retrieved from dissercat.com
- Schroeder, M. (2009). *Fractals, chaos, power laws: Minutes from an infinite paradise*. Mineola, NY: Dover Publications. (Original work published 1991)
- Soros, G. (1995). Toward open societies. *Foreign Policy*, 98, 65–75. doi: 10.2307/1148958
- Vinogradova, Ye. V. (1992). *Osobennosti mezhlchnostnykh otnosheny v detskikh domakh i shkolkh-internatakh* [Interpersonal relations in orphanages and boarding schools] (Abstract of unpublished doctoral dissertation). General and Pedagogical Psychology Research Institute, Academy of Pedagogical Sciences, Moscow. Retrieved from dissercat.com

Original manuscript received June 01, 2016

Revised manuscript accepted December 20, 2016

First published online March 31, 2017

## **Appendix 1.**

List of the objects for identification using the Repertory Grid Technique

1. A person you know well and whom you trust
2. A person you know well and whom you don't trust
3. You yourself
4. A person whom you would like to meet with and talk to
5. A person who takes too much upon himself/herself
6. The head of the administration or the mayor of your town
7. A famous and influential person of your town whom you know well
8. A relative or acquaintance whom you like who is living in your neighborhood
9. The head of the Nizhny Novgorod region administration (the governor)
10. A famous and influential person in the Nizhny Novgorod region whom you know better
11. A relative or acquaintance whom you are keeping in touch with who is living in Nizhny Novgorod
12. The Russian president
13. A famous and influential person from Moscow whom you know better
14. A relative or acquaintance whom you are keeping in touch with who is living in Moscow