



Connection between the Russian adolescents’ level of personal sovereignty and their possession of the individual space

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Introduction

The study is based on Theory of Privacy (Altman, 1975) and on Theory of Psychological Sovereignty (Nartova-Bochaver, 2005). This subject is very important in Russia because our adolescents have been experiencing lack of both the personal space and the psychological sovereignty for a long time.

Concepts and Theories

Privacy is a main regulatory process that allows the person to be more or less available for other people (Altman, 1975). It is also an ability of the person to choose place of activity and to limit information stream during communication. The word “privacy” is currently used to describe a lot of different things: freedom of thought, control over personal information, freedom from surveillance, protection of one’s reputation, protection from invasions into one’s home, etc... (Solove, 2002). The followers of Theory of Privacy investigate a behavior mainly.

Psychological (personal) sovereignty (on French souverain - the carrier of the Supreme authority) is a personality’s ability of supervising, protecting and developing his or her psychological space (Nartova-Bochaver, 2005). This ability develops by means of generalization of successful independent behavior. Psychological space of the person is defined in our works as a fragment of reality that is significant for a person, determines its actual activity and life strategy and includes a complex of physical, social and psychological phenomena that the person identifies him- or herself with. Sovereignty is shown in the inner experience of personal borders integrity.

Certainly the real life and its reflection in the inner experience of the person are interrelated. There are a lot of works in ethology and environmental psychology showing how important for the person is the possession of the own private lot or room. This need is especially acute in the adolescence (Wolfe, 1978).

But we can suppose that connection between the real dwelling situation and the sense of the own integrity could be indirect because one dimension inside the psychological space may be substituted by another so the level of “total” sovereignty may be kept high. Furthermore, we can expect that the “everyday life languages” used for this compensation may vary depending on sex and other individual parameters.

Possession of the own room is an independent variable, while personal sovereignty is a dependent one.

Hypotheses

- 1. The more long time are individual rooms possessed by adolescents the higher is the level of their personal sovereignty.
- 2. This connection is modulated by adolescent’s gender.

Measures and procedure

Sample. 60 adolescents from Moscow (30 girls, 30 boys, aged 13-15) participated in this study.

Methods. The form “Objective living conditions” and the questionnaire “Sovereignty of the Psychological Space” (SPS) were used. All respondents were distributed into 3 groups: adolescents who (1) have a room since they were born, (2) have a room since the age of 6, (3) share their room with some of relatives.

The questionnaire “Sovereignty of the Psychological Space” has 80 items, each of them describes potentially depriving situation from the childhood. They are joined into 6 scales according to 6 dimensions of the psychological space: Sovereignty of Body, Territory, Personal Things and Belongings, Time and Regime habits, Social connections, Tastes and Values. This questionnaire has been checked about validity, consistency, representativeness, and standardization for two age groups. It has been published in Russian and translated into German and English.

Examples of SPS-items.

- 1. My hair wasn’t cut if I didn’t agree to it.
- 2. It was at common that my parents switched TV from my range to another while I was watching it.
- 3. I always played by myself when I was at home, if I wanted to.
- 4. In our house it was forbidden, to have a snack between breakfast, dinner and supper.
- 5. My parents only considered it necessary to buy me things when I had earned them by my good work or behavior.
- 6. If my friends proposed that I spent the night with them, my parents usually didn’t mind.
- 7. Adults thought for some reason that they might enter the bathroom or the toilet when the child is inside, and didn’t let me lock the door.
- 8. My parents stopped my attempts to decorate myself with different things which weren’t in fashion in their youth (piercing, tattoo, hair-dresses).

Results and discussion

To compare SPS-means in three groups it was a non-parametric criterion H by Kruskal-Wallis calculated (H=6,63>5,9, p<0,05 for boys; H=57>9,1, p<0,01 for girls).

Table 1. Means and dispersions of SPS in boys depending on their possession of the own room

Scale of Sovereignty	(1) n=8 have a room since they were born	(2) n=13 have a room since the age of 6	(3) n=10 share their room with some of relatives
Total	19 (90)	21 (220)	22 (323)
Body	3 (11)	5 (17)	5 (17)
Territory	3 (8)	2 (17)	3 (18)
Things and Belongings	4 (11)	3 (15)	3 (36)
Time and Regime habits	2 (17)	4 (12)	3 (18)
Social connections	2 (9)	3 (14)	2 (6)
Tastes and Values	6 (16)	6 (18)	5 (17)

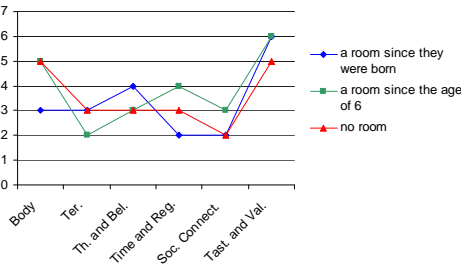


Fig. 1. SPS-means in boys from different groups

Table 2. Means and dispersions of SPS in girls depending on their possession of the own room

Scale of Sovereignty	(1) n=10 have a room since they were born	(2) n=9 have a room since the age of 6	(3) n=11 share their room with some of relatives
Total	25 (333)	25 (635)	32 (490)
Body	4 (15)	4 (26)	5 (22)
Territory	3 (14)	3 (31)	3 (36)
Things and Belongings	6 (23)	5 (50)	7 (41)
Time and Regime habits	5 (31)	4 (24)	5 (30)
Social connections	3 (10)	2 (3)	5 (4)
Tastes and Values	5 (32)	7 (44)	7 (9)

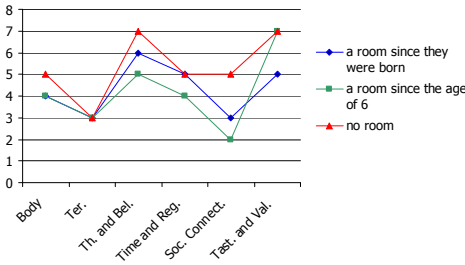


Fig. 2. SPS-means in girls from different groups

The outcome proved to be unexpected: adolescents who don’t have their own room have a highest level of personal sovereignty, this connection is more significant in girls. So the first hypothesis is not confirmed, and the second one is confirmed.

Obtained results may be considered from the point of view of social situation inside the family and of different evolutionary and social aims of both genders. Firstly, if the child grows up in the close contact with other family members it learns probably to get along with them and to protect its own sovereignty more effective. So these children seem to be less vulnerable.

Secondly, the highest sovereignty level is demonstrated in boys who share their room with some of relatives. Less high is sovereignty of boys who got a room in preschool age. Maybe this age is sensitive to territoriality.

In girls from all groups is evident the highest level of the sovereignty of Things and belongings, independent on the presence of own room. Movable property has been more important for females in comparison to males and in comparison to women’s wish to possess the territory as immovable property. It has been shown also that sovereignty in girls who got a room after 6 years is very varied. We don’t know why and how our respondents have become the owner but they seem to be more upset with the loss of the neighbour then to be glad with the own personal space. The highest level is in girls who haven’t a room at all.

We can suppose that socialization ways in boys and girls are based on different needs and that the social interaction is more important for sovereignty development then possession of personal space until adolescence.

Results show that the level of personal sovereignty is influenced not by the possession of the own territory only but by the use of alternative environmental languages of Self-confirmation. They should be specified on the larger sample.

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