

Fifth-Graders Moving into Adulthood: The 1960s vs. the 2010s

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Abstract. The behavior of fifth-grade students from a Moscow school was observed during a 12 week period as a replication of a similar project undertaken in the mid-1960s [Elkonin, Dragunova 1967]. Since the original research results were represented not as a text but as individual descriptions of 13 school students, observation criteria had to be identified. The criteria were grouped into so-called domains, describing how teenagers behaved among their peers, at home, and at school. The key behavioral characteristic was the indica-

tors of the emerging sense of maturity in school children, i. e. of their drive for grown-up behavior associated with freedom and responsibility. These criteria formed the basis of the 2016 observation program. The diversity of adolescent behavioral patterns has been found to be much greater than in the original study. In addition, the linear formula of the value of learning being replaced with that of communication with peers (close interpersonal relationships) has been brought into question. As it transpires, the value of learning remains high for most fifth-graders, regardless of whether they need communication or not. Such an attitude towards learning might be encouraged by family and school, which is typical for this category of children. Four types of school students have been identified based on the indicators of their interest in learning and communication. The article cites fragments of observation protocols and semi-structured interviews. Hypotheses on how the transition to adolescence is affected by family and school characteristics have been put forward, and further observations of school students with different backgrounds have been designed.

Keywords: sense of maturity, adolescence, clinical observation, mental development crisis.

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Research in childhood education cannot avoid comparisons between children’s characteristics of the past and the present. A promising technique of such comparisons consists of finding and reproducing studies from past decades. The book *Specific Age-Related and Individual Characteristics of Younger Adolescents* under the editorship of Daniil Elkonin and Katerina Polivanova, first published in 1967, describes a study unique to both Russian and international psychology. This is a long-term clinical, as defined by the authors, observation of the behavior of fifth-grade students in a Moscow school. In addition to theoretical aspects of research, the book presents detailed descriptive character sketches, or psychological portraits, of 13 students. These character sketches represent a valuable illustration of childhood in the early 1960s.

The clinical observation model offered by the authors of the 1967 study was reproduced in 2016. This pilot study was designed to test the reproducibility of the whole observation procedure and to describe the findings of the present-day study in terms of the hypotheses and assumptions put forward by the original research authors.

An intrinsic challenge that manifested itself at the preparatory stage was how the 1967 findings were presented. The book contains the methods, conversations, interviews, observations of school and out-of-school behavior—but provides no protocols or data obtained. The findings are fragmented and can be found in each of the three book chapters, mostly among the student descriptions. In order to obtain material for comparisons, the student descriptions were disaggregated, and the basic characteristics that had been the focus of research 50 years ago were identified.

The 1967 study was supposed to be the first stage of a large-scale research program. Unfortunately, there was no follow-up. Therefore, the current study was based on the available material, the more so since the original study has been presented as complete in the scientific community.

1. Theoretical framework

1.1. Sense of maturity

The 1967 study was premised on the fundamental assumptions of cultural-historical psychology, in particular on the ideas of changes to the leading activity and crises in mental development [Elkonin 1971; Vygotsky 1984; Polivanova 2000]. The concept of sense of maturity was introduced to describe the feeling children experience while moving from their early school age into adolescence¹. Sense of maturity

¹ This statement requires some clarification: according to Lev Vygotsky’s classical theory, “neoformations” of each relevant age period are shaped by the end of such a period. However, Elkonin and Dragunova’s work attribute the sense of maturity to early adolescence. Therefore, it is considered to be the neoformation of the previous stage, i. e. elementary school age, even though the original work contains variant readings of this issue (e. g. sense

ty can manifest itself in protest behavior or in positive behavior patterns: “Adolescents develop maturity of different types through their relationships with people around them, which are built after the fashion of adult world relationships, as well as through activities in which they are guided by adult behavior patterns and role models. Developing a sense of maturity is associated with learning to be independent. If independence is deliberately granted to an adolescent by parents, there will be no conflict between the evolving sense of maturity and how adults perceive it, which means that the adolescent will suffer no dissatisfaction with adults’ attitude; thus, various forms of protest will have nothing to feed on. If an adolescent’s independence is only prompted by specific life circumstances while adults still treat them as a child, this attitude will be in conflict with the evolving sense of maturity. Such disagreement will manifest itself in confrontations and conflicts between the adolescent and adults.” [Elkonin, Dragunova 1967: 333] According to the authors, conflict-proneness (protest behavior) in adolescents results from adults’ attitude that inhibits positive manifestations of maturity; however, if “adults inculcate the sense of maturity in children through interpersonal relationships and by granting them independence, <...> both the sense of maturity and maturity as such will develop smoothly and painlessly, without too much conflict or stress.” [Ibid.]

1.2. Indicators of maturity

Since the original study provides no research findings but only character sketches of individual children, an analysis of the 13 psychological portraits was conducted. It was used to identify specific “domains” that were the focus of the original researchers as well as some indicators of maturity in each of the domains. Each domain could have both positive and negative indicators of maturity (Table 1).

2. Research design

In the original study, psychologists observed the classroom and out-of-class behavior of fifth-graders in a Moscow school during one academic year. In addition, they conducted individual and group interviews with the students, discussed students and their classroom activities with teachers, made character sketches, and talked to parents. Sociometry was also used to investigate relationships in the classroom. As part of the project, the children wrote essays on the topics “Let’s Talk about Ourselves” and “On Friendship and Friends”.

The 2016 observations took place three times a week (every Monday, Wednesday and Friday) from February through to May and covered all of the classes and the breaks between them. The observations entailed two observers working together (12 weeks, totaling about 540

of maturity is often referred to as the neof ormation of the whole period of adolescence).

Table 1. **Indicators of maturity** (as per the original text)

Indicator	Positive	Negative
Independence and initiative	Experience of living away from parents; independent mobility; experience of working and earning money; clear prospects for the future; engagement in social activities; new interests	Abnormal behavior patterns (“excessive kindness”, window smashing, theft, etc.); risky adventures
Relationships with adults	Household chores; helping and caring for adults in cases of illness	Critical attitude towards adults’ opinions; protest behavior; feeling lonely and like an outsider in one’s own family; imitating adults
Attitude towards learning	Consistent academic performance; interest; inquisitiveness; parental control of academic achievements; responsible and scrupulous attitude towards homework; being concerned about grades	Change from treating learning as a value to declaring neglect of it; depreciation; concealed concerns about learning and grades
Relationships with peers	Status; authority; going over to one another’s homes; assistance in cases of illness; standing up for younger peers; placing a high value on fellowship; differentiated perception of people; complex moral and ethical criteria	Submissiveness; imitation; lack of immediate perception; interest in sex; flirtation; sexual advances; exaggerated attention to one’s own appearance; abrupt change in one’s social circles; susceptibility to influence
Sense of maturity	Wanting adults to treat them as an equal Seeking independence and trying to keep some spheres of personal life free from adult interference Following one’s own behavioral patterns despite adults’/peers’ disapproval	

hours of observations). Discussions were held immediately after the observations, and handwritten observation protocols were completed the same day, jointly by both observers in free form, using pens/pencils and notepads. The protocols were concealed from both the children and the teachers. At the end of each observation day, all protocol data was entered into a separate text file, common for both observers [Sokolova 2005]. An array of protocols completed by two observers for each observation day, totaling about 500,000 characters with spaces (or 200 standard pages), was obtained in the course of the study.

The protocoling procedure reconstructed from the original study and described in the previous section was used in this study. Some questions were added to make allowance for the present-day activities of children and adolescents, in particular gadget use: How are gadgets used in communication among children? Are they important for communication? Is it important to have them? How are they used for learning purposes, if at all? In addition to the observations, semi-structured interviews with the children and the teachers were conducted.

To ensure that the study was ethically appropriate and to consider the interests of all the participants, interview consents were obtained from the children (verbally) and the teachers (in writing), in addition to parents’ written consent for psychodiagnostic testing and the psychological support of their children. The project received the approv-

al of the Committee on Interuniversity Surveys and Ethical Assessment of Empirical Research of the National Research University Higher School of Economics.

Eleven people made up the team of observers. The size of the team is well-justified, as the project involved experts with various degrees (PhD holders, postgraduate students, Master's and Bachelor's students) in various fields (psychology, education, history, and sociology).

The sample consisted of 29 fifth-grade students from a school in the Western Administrative Okrug of Moscow, of which 16 were girls and 13 were boys, all aged 11 or 12.

The original study does not specify the school whose students were observed, but its name was widely known both when the project was active and after it was over. This was a central Moscow school enrolling children from the neighborhood; however, parents began to bring their kids to the school from other neighborhoods as well in the early 1960s, as the school was growing more popular. As a result, it largely served families that were highly concerned about the quality of education.

The school that served the basis for the 2016 study is located in a high-end, relatively new neighborhood of Moscow, representing a row of individually enclosed residential compounds.

This school is designed to teach children from Grade 1 through to Grade 11 in two or three parallel classes, which means that its size allows teachers and administrators to know each other personally.

The respondents' classroom creates a good impression. The wall newspaper congratulations, including caricatures, have been designed by students themselves.

The school follows a rather conventional teaching policy, where teachers are largely focused on discipline, transfer of knowledge, and the development of a certain corporate (though deeply competitive) spirit of the class and of the school as such. The administrators foster the idea of special gymnasium education style, which implies special behavioral standards; in particular, there are dress codes for both students and teachers. The level of teacher competencies is rather high, yet teachers rarely resort to innovative techniques. Children are normally seated at their desks, the teacher addressing them as an audience, not as partners; problem-based learning is a rare case; discipline restoring methods are not too strict, yet low-effective.

Many teachers are responsive to the children's individual needs, show deep sympathy with their emotional experiences, attempt to build interpersonal relationships with them, and are willing to render emotional support (most often, however, in tête-a-tête conversations after the lesson).

Most children are raised in families with incomes higher than average, by parents with college degrees, and engaged in supplementary education.

The school environment is characterized by a high value placed on grades by teachers as well as students and their parents. This was proved by observations in different classes where the children were deeply stressed after being assigned grades lower than “excellent” (self-destructive behavior, crying, etc.).

3. Types of behavior depending on the type of leading activity

Having the conception of leading activity [Leontiev 1944] as the key age characteristic in mind, we expected to see a gradual transition of children from learning activities to interpersonal relationships, or children at different stages of such a transition, by analogy with the study of the 1960s. In other words, we expected to see interest in learning and teacher authority fade away and be replaced by interest in communication and peer authority.

So, what was actually observed in the children? It was revealed that behavior typical of early school-age children and adolescents was demonstrated by some students at the same time, yet in different situations.

In accordance with the leading activity theory, early school-age children are expected to show diligence, commitment to school requirements, responsible fulfillment of those requirements, and recognition of teacher authority while showing low interest in interactions with peers. Children who have moved onto the adolescent stage are expected to neglect school requirements and authorities (or follow “their own” cognitive interest) while engaging actively in communication with peers, knowing the rules of their reference groups, and taking part in various adolescent activities. That is, the classical linear model suggests that the value of school requirements is replaced with that of peer group rules, and student-teacher relationships give way to relationships with peers as the most significant domain. However, it was found that different indicators did not necessarily supersede one another; instead, they could coexist or be simultaneously absent. Thus, four types of student behavior can be logically constructed as combinations of indicators (Table 2).

Children with an early school-age, or infantile, type of behavior are obedient in the classroom and concerned about their academic achievements; they show respect for the teacher and appreciate the teacher’s opinion. They regard peers first of all as partners in learning and demonstrate no adolescent behavior as such within their peer groups.

“Vitya² answers a lot during the lesson, trying to finish sentences before the teacher does. His answers sound passionate and sensible. He definitely likes both the study material and the opportuni-

² All children’s names have been changed.

Table 2. Types of student behavior as combinations of behavioral patterns typical of early school-age children and adolescents

		Knowing and fulfilling peer group behavioral regulations; engagement in typical informal adolescent activities	
		Yes	No
Knowing and fulfilling formal school requirements and regulations in the classroom	Yes	++ Mixed	+ - Early school-age/ infantile
	No	- + Purely adolescent	- - Suppressed

ty to answer. The teacher's reaction is his only concern. The teacher is very satisfied with him."

"At the end of the lesson, the teacher suggests that students recollect what has been learned; children recite what they have learned with great pleasure, almost excitement. On the whole, students seem to be very involved and almost never get distracted from the lesson. Informal behavior is very rare. Children answers questions and perform tasks with joy and enthusiasm."

"Mary reminds Marina strictly that they are not allowed to use correction fluids."

"Yura takes out a neat and beautiful red thick reference book (dictionary and rules he has written down) from his backpack and flips through, reading carefully. He stamps his foot and even growls when the teacher asks someone else. Trying to attract her attention, he claps his hands quietly and speaks from his place."

A purely adolescent type is characterized by protest behavior in the classroom, depreciation of the teacher and learning, frequent verbal conflicts with the teacher, and discredit to the unconditional authority of an adult. Adolescent issues dominate informal conversations with peers: games, gadgets, fleshliness, sexualized behavior, etc. Such students can be referred to as typical adolescents with proneness to crisis.

"When answering, Misha makes a lot of mistakes and gets stressed and upset. After another incorrect answer, Anton (his desk mate)

asks him loudly: “What have you smoked? Excuse me? Dope?” Nobody pays attention. Anton asks Lyosha when he solves a problem orally: “What have you smoked? What have you smoked?”.

“In the classroom hallway, Angelina was making a ponytail by flipping her head back. Grisha reacted by exclaiming, “Wow!”.”

“Misha, Andrey and Pyotr have gathered around Ayrat, looking into his phone and discussing a game app. Seryozha comes up; he is let into the close circle. Yura comes up, saying cheerfully and jokingly, “You’ll die over my game.” Everyone looks at him for a few seconds, then ignores him.”

Adolescents whose behavior is referred to as a mixed type demonstrate socially approved behavior in the classroom, being active, showing interest in the teacher’s evaluation, and attaching importance to academic success. At the same time, they are deeply engaged in communication with peers, beginning to stand up for themselves in front of some adults and showing interest in whatever has to do with self-image and gender relationships. This type embodies the idea of the heterochronic beginning of adolescence [Vygotsky 1984]. It may be that some behavioral patterns typical of early school age are preserved due to a high degree of involvement in learning (induced by the teacher or interest in a specific subject), cognitive motivation, achievement motivation, and/or parental involvement.

“Evgeny and Seryozha know the material well; they are confident in their knowledge, relaxed, talking to each other pretty much all the time (even while their classmates are answering). They try to “get smart” a little bit, answering with a lot of self-confidence, criticizing their classmates for their lack of perception, being intolerant to their slowness, allowing themselves to be overactive, and speaking out of turn. They are bored.”

“Anton makes an oral report in German. Seryozha and Vasya listen to him with an expression of amusement and failure to grasp on their faces, clearly admiring his story but also demonstrating that it is too sophisticated. The others applaud and praise Anton as the story is over. Later on, Anton also tells them about the old friendship ties between Germany and Russia.”

“Vasya argues with the teacher: “But I’m not talking! Okay, fine... fine, I’m silent.” He talks to the teacher with a smile on his face and attempts to correct her. He also corrects and complements answers of his classmates emotionally: “Ah, just the train!” (translation), “Yeah, because mayor used to be called burgomaster.” He asks the teacher about the location of cities on the map of Germa-

ny to check if he remembers right and shares his travel memories. Towards the end of the lesson, Sergey gives him a light headnut (for “peacockery”, apparently).”

Suppressed children demonstrate low interest in learning, depreciation of academic achievements, and weak orientation towards the teacher. Meanwhile, their interaction with peers is rather formal: they abstain from “unsafe” behavioral practices, discussion of sexual development issues and strong friendship ties. Such children can demonstrate disconnectedness from both peers and academic activities. However, the seeming indifference to learning and new forms of group behavior may conceal complicated emotions, which are locked inside.

This category is the most difficult to recognize, as “non-manifestation” on one scale exacerbates isolation on the other one: children who do not communicate with peers enjoy no popularity and can become targets of mockery or bullying, which will inhibit their motivation for learning. On the other hand, children who are not interested in learning risk becoming outsiders and falling out of communication with peers against their will in a group focused on the value of learning and competitiveness, which is true for the class chosen for this study. Therefore, this category encompasses children with different characteristics, which might be indicators of their individual specific features, not of a stage in their mental development.

There are two girls in the surveyed class who match this description best: they are low-performing and unpopular. One of them (Angelina) is teased on a regular basis, while the other one (Karina) is simply ignored. Teachers usually have them seated together at the front desk.

“A few high-school students (grade 8 or 9) are sitting on a bench by the classroom. They are noteworthy girls: short bouffant skirts, make-up, “duck lips”. Angelina is among them. The girls ask her for a selfie one by one. It soon becomes obvious that they are blatantly mocking her. Angelina is unaware of it, posing with pleasure, smiling broadly, and telling them about her account with 700 followers. The girls are laughing at her. She seems to be confused a little, but still unaware of what is going on.”

“Karina is doing the task slower than anyone; she reads the sheet with the task on it, running her pen along the lines and uttering the text <...>, strikes something through in the sheet languishing for a while—probably because correction fluids are not allowed.

The teacher calls out those who are to speak next: ‘And what about Karina!? We-e-ell, let’s give it a try (she has not said a word for the whole lesson yet). So, Karina, shall you!? You’re afraid!? Oh, sweetie. Okay, then.’”

“Karina is asked a question. She does not respond. ‘Karina is a sleep,’ says Eva.

“Karina is not bothered anymore in the German class. However, the English teacher asks her a question. She answers correctly, yet stumbles a lot. When Eva attempts to give a hint: ‘Let her think!’ When Karina gets lost completely: ‘Valya, help.’”

The “mixed” type is the most interesting one. These are children who behave like typical early school-agers in the classroom: they are diligent, seeking the teacher’s attention and good grades, and are competitive, while demonstrating purely adolescent behavior elsewhere—during breaks, before and after classes, in communication with each other and online—namely engagement in reference groups, imitation, flirtation, quarreling, etc. It appears that such children change their behavior at their own discretion, following the requirements of the specific social situation. This type of behavior, on the one hand, indicates a high level of their social competence, i. e. ability to identify and demonstrate different behavioral patterns that are preferable under different conditions, but on the other hand it disproves the idea of transition between the two stages, since indicators of both are observed at the same time and there is no reason to say that one is reduced and the other is reinforced.

Let us illustrate this through the example of one child. Eva is one of the tallest and most physically developed girls in the class. Her behavior is very diverse and includes typical elementary school patterns, induced by the desire to obtain good grades and the teacher’s recognition, as well as protest behavior and criticism of adults typical of adolescents. She behaves differently in different classes.

“Eva comes out to the blackboard and answers with mistakes. Teacher: “You’re only gaining the vertical part of a plus now.” Eva keeps raising her hand from her place before the teacher even asks a question and does not lower it even during note-taking. She is called to the blackboard again to recite a lesson for a grade. She works well, gets an A, lifts both her hands in the horn sign, and runs down from the blackboard podium.”

“Eva gives a lot of correct answers. While everyone else is listening to an audio poem in English, she is filling out her school diary. When the teacher asks her a question, she provides a good, detailed answer. Ayrat applauds to show his approval.”

The observations described above demonstrate a high level of academic motivation, the need for approval, and rivalry with other children for the teacher’s attention.

“Eva, Misha and Valera react to the “funny” name “Suzanna” in the task by pronouncing it with different intonations. Misha and Eva talk, sitting at different desks. Eva gives a headnut to Evgeny. The teacher gives her a redirection, threatening her with an F. <...> The teacher’s patience runs out: Eva is made to change her seat (for the one next to the observer). Unblushingly and blatantly, she looks into the observer’s notes. Her behavior does not change: she comments on everything that is going on in the classroom, answers all the questions asked to other students, and bangs her head against the desk, saying: “It’s terrible! Such a bore!”.”

“During the break Eva, Valera and the boys from the second desk in the row by the window were running around the hallway; the boys were holding Eva by her arms while she was trying to break free; the next moment, she was throwing herself at the boys, trying to “strangle” them.”

“Eva is talking to Valera; she intentionally answers the teacher’s question incorrectly. While talking to Valera, she is playing with a protractor, now waving it as a fan, then wearing it as a knuckle, then pretending to cut her throat out of boredom. Eva gets angry when her answer is not heard by the teacher. To the teacher’s question, “Why are you so slow?” she answers: “Maybe because we are Pokémons and we are Slowpokes.”.”

These observations reveal manifestations of adolescent behavior, such as loss of academic motivation and deprecation of learning (boredom), flirting with boys, and neglect of school regulations (disrespect for the teacher, commenting aloud during the lesson).

4. Sense of maturity and development of independence

The process of moving into adulthood and the specific aspects of developing independence cannot be anything but different for children in a modern city and the participants of the survey conducted by Elkonin and Dragunova. Lifestyles and family routines have undergone a drastic change over the last 50 years. Urbanization has made the everyday lives of citizens much more comfortable, on the one hand, but on the other hand it has brought about overpopulation, anonymization of neighbors, and greater distances between home and place of work or study. Modern technology has made the Internet, in particular news from all over the world, accessible at any time. As a result, the ideas associated with child independence—mobility, responsibilities, and independence growth rates—have mutated significantly over recent years.

For example, Elkonin and Dragunova’s study cites an example of a prospective fifth-grader who earned some extra money during summer vacations by serving as a cabin boy on the ship in which his fa-

ther-in-law was a sailor. Children mostly spent their spare time on Pioneer Movement events and extracurricular activities at school, in which they engaged with various degrees of enthusiasm. Many parents worked shifts or until late, so children would often spend a lot of time alone at home or invite their friends to come over. As a consequence, they possessed basic household skills, like heating or cooking food, cleaning up, or going shopping. They were used to doing their homework themselves and often tried to take care of their parents, especially overworked single mothers.

The children whom we surveyed reported doing their household duties occasionally.

I: Do you have any household duties?

R: Household duties... Well, yeah, like I can wash dishes when I have time.

I: And do you maybe help your mom with cleaning up, for example?

R: Yes, I do, I clean dust.

I: Do you cook?

R: I can only cook salads and soups for now.

I: What do you think is the most important thing your parents expect from you?

R: I think learning and good performance are the most important.

R: ...When mom sends me, like, somewhere... so I go there. Like, to buy something at a grocery store, so I go.

I: I see. And do you maybe have any other household duties, apart from going shopping?

R: Yes, I do. I should do vacuum cleaning, help my mom... er... do a lot of things... er... and my dad, too. For example, when my dad was installing the curtains, we... well, I would, like... dad would hang them and I would give him the pegs and hold the ladder.

I: Do you have any household responsibilities?

R: You mean, doing something?

I: Yeah, like washing dishes or cooking.

R: Well, no, I normally don't, unless my mom asks me; or I can offer my help sometimes.

I: What do you think is the most important thing your parents expect from you?

R: I don't know, I think it's just, well, that I do well in the future, and have a happy life, and find a good job.

I: What is a decent job for you?

R: Well, I've been always interested in medicine and the like, and now I wanna be a cosmetologist.

A typical day looks like this.

R: Well, I get up, I do the homework I didn't finish yesterday, I have breakfast, and I get ready, they take me to school, then I finish my classes, and after-school classes, and then I do my homework and go to after-school clubs, and if I don't have any, I call my mom and she takes me home.

Or like this.

R: First, I've got school classes, on Monday I've got classes, then I do my homework with my mom, then I go to Kūdō³ classes, and I only get home at 11 p. m. Next day, I go to school, then to English courses, and come home at 6 p. m. Then, on Wednesday I've got school, supplementary courses in Russian, and then judo. School, English and Kūdō on Thursdays. School and judo on Fridays.

I: But when do you do your homework?

R: Me and my mom, we go to a café after school and do my homework there.

I: Does she help you?

R: It depends on the subject. She helps me with French and mathematics. As for the rest, I do it myself.

I: How do you relax? From what you have said, you don't have much free time.

R: I don't relax. I had a... My grandma came to visit us once and she was surprised: I went to dad's study, er, to read a book during the weekend, and I lay reading until I fell asleep at 7 p. m., and I only woke up at 11 a. m. next day.

Judging by the interview data, fifth-graders have a heavy academic schedule: for instance, supplementary courses can take up all of their weekday evenings. All other aspects, like friendship, entertainment, or household duties, can only be squeezed into the available intervals. It is not inconceivable that such time-management, initiated by parents, retains the social development of children within the early school age period and inhibits their transition to the next stage, as communication with peers is impeded and restricted to the learning environment.

All students have accounts in the Vkontakte social networking service, where they post their photos and exchange "likes". However, they are reserved in telling the interviewers about it. It can be suggested that social media has become the space that is isolated from adults, allowing the development of certain adolescent skills beyond their control. That is why children are not eager to manifest their web activities and mostly go online from home.

I: As far as I understand, you have more than one social media account, don't you?

³ Full-contact martial art.

R: Yes.

I: Which social media are those?

R: Vkontakte, Instagram... Well, that's pretty much it, the ones I use the most. I mostly use Vkontakte to keep in touch with my friends, and I also like communities about drawing, because I've been drawing since I was small... I like looking at others' works to borrow their style or just to experiment. Just to see how other people draw.

I: And what about Instagram?

R: Well, Instagram is more like... My account is private, so it's kind of for my friends and family, so they know what's up... And besides, with Instagram you can capture some bright moments of your life, and then look through them next year and recall those moments.

I: I see. How long have you been on social media?

R: Well, I joined Instagram when I came to this school. And Vkontakte... I was like eight years old. Because I wanted to keep in touch with my friends and family, I just signed up for communication.

R: Well, I signed up partly to communicate with my friends. It's just that some of them have push-button phones, so they can use Vkontakte on their PCs, and I can get in touch with them.

I: I see, and do you have many classmates as your friends on Vkontakte?

R: Yes, I do... er... well, almost all of them, and most often I talk to my friend from the drawing class.

I: Why her?

R: Well, because she is only available on Vkontakte, and we see each other very rarely, only in the drawing classes.

I: Do you receive many likes on Instagram? You said you've got a profile, right?

R: Yeah, but I used to receive likes when I posted something. Now I'm kind of passive there, because I don't have the time.

I: And you, do you often "like" something?

R: Hmm... Well, on Instagram, as I said, I almost don't use it, and on Vkontakte—no (laughing), I just browse.”

When discussing the attitude of teachers toward students, children say the following.

I: How do teachers treat you: as adults or as kids?

R: I think they treat those who are reserved and well-mannered as adults, with respect, but they probably treat those who laze away or yell in the classroom all the time as kids who should be sent to a kindergarten.

I: Do you think teachers treat you more as adults or rather as kids?

R: Well, I don't know. I think they treat us as kids. Mariya Ivanovna says that we are still small yet because we misbehave in the classroom,

and grown-ups behave well, they don't talk, and they do nothing... bad.

The respondents associate adulthood with abundant responsibilities, liability, financial independence and sufficiency. This image does not attract them too much: childhood lures them with joys and no responsibilities. Students find it difficult to identify themselves as either adults or children.

I: What do you think it means to be an adult?

R: I think to be an adult means to be able to provide for your family and to realize that you're a fulfilled person and you can leave your parents' home.

I: And what does it mean to be a fulfilled person?

R: It means that you have a job and you can afford to buy your own house or apartment.

I: How grown-up do you think you are now?

R: Well, I don't really know if I'm a child or a grown-up.

I: What do you think it means to be an adult?

R: To be an adult? Well, first of all, it's like... more responsibilities, you're growing up, and everything is changing, to my mind.

I: Like what, for example?

R: For example, some views on life, like when you get upset with something as a child, but in an adult life it's like, "So what?" Like that.

I: Cannot it be vice versa? When you begin to take something more personally.

R: Well... Maybe.

I: I see. How grown-up do you think you are, how do you see yourself?

R: I see myself more as a child, I don't know, because I behave sometimes as a child, and besides we're only in middle school now.

On the whole, this uncertainty is typical of the age of transition, but the expected affectation of maturity is not revealed here. These children don't mind staying kids for a longer period of time—perhaps because they suffer from overload learning and indeed have not enough time for being kids.

5. Adolescents today and fifty years ago

Our study revealed significant discrepancies between the life of modern children and what was described based on the observations of the 1960s⁴. Sense of maturity as well as "objective" maturity devel-

⁴ In no way are these findings considered to be final or indicative of younger

op today “on the basis of different substrates” than those described by Elkonin and Dragunova: modern fifth-graders have much fewer household duties, less independent mobility, and fewer opportunities for making autonomous decisions. However, they now have the Internet as a space isolated from the control of adults. Behavior observed during this study appears to be more infantile, rather typical of early school-age children, yet some deep reflexive reasoning on one’s age and growing-up can be found in the interviews. Negative manifestations and protest behavior are observed much less often than expected. There is reason to believe—based on the data from our peculiar sample—that the everyday life of modern adolescents provides fewer opportunities for growing up, in the traditional sense. Adulthood does not look attractive; maturity, in terms of taking responsibility for learning outcomes, develops comparatively early; parents are focused on continuous learning and decent careers for their kids, thus “suppressing” their childhood—as a result, any sense of maturity does not develop through explicit manifestations but rather catches up with physiological maturation.

Learning and academic achievement remain highly valued by most children. Such value orientations are in line with school ambitions to ensure high performance and the admission of graduates to colleges, as well as with parental strategies of encouraging the engagement of children in school and extracurricular learning activities.

Importantly, respondents consistently demonstrate socially desirable behavior at school when being supervised by adults. Apparently, modern adolescents feel more relaxed in their interactions with teachers, manifesting it through disputes, which nevertheless have a culturally acceptable structure. Following on from our observations, we can now only suggest that socially unacceptable behavioral patterns (aggressive, sexualized, or protest behavior) are canalized to the online communication realm. All children possess profiles on social networking sites and use them actively, as can be judged from the interviews. It appears that the Internet provides them with an environment alternative to the learning one, and children are not too willing to let adults into that zone.

The 2016 observation answered the most important question: it proved the possibility of reproducing the projects of past years, although the change in research design requirements called for taking into account deontological limitations, which are not mentioned in the original study.

A mere comparison of findings turned out to be impossible, as no formal findings were presented in the original text. The major chal-

adolescents in general. The sample is rather specific, consisting of children from advantaged families attending an advantaged school. What was important was to demonstrate reproducibility of such observations as such and to prove acceptability of interpretations differing from the original ones.

lenge encountered in the course of the research has to do with the rigid cultural-historical theory framework of the study of the 1960s. Child development was recognized as following a universal pattern (succession of periods of stability and crisis); the concept of the sense of maturity was introduced to denote the development of the “neoformation” of adolescence. Illustrative examples were used to prove the hypothesis, but there were no observation protocols or charts with research findings. Technically, the original study was a qualitative one, and so was the replication.

Sense of maturity, the fundamental concept of the original study, was thrown into question in the course of the observations and findings discussion. Genetically, it is associated inextricably with the idea of adulthood and its unconditional value. However, research from recent decades raises doubts about modern children’s craving to grow up. No immediate testing of or firm evidence for this assumption has been found in the existing studies. Therefore, the question of whether adulthood as such is a value for adolescents today defines prospects for further research.

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