Extremism among College and High School Students in Moscow: Diagnostics Features

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Abstract—In this day and age, extremism in various forms of its manifestation is a real threat to the world community, the national security of a state and its territorial integrity, as well as to the constitutional rights and freedoms of citizens. Extremism, as it is known, in general terms described as a commitment to extreme views and actions, radically denying the existing social norms and rules. Supporters of extremism in the ideological and political struggles often adopt methods and means of psychological warfare, appeal not to reason and logical arguments, but to emotions and instincts of the people, to prejudices, biases, and a variety of mythological designs. They are dissatisfied with the established order and aim at increasing this dissatisfaction among the masses. Youth extremism holds a specific place among the existing forms and types of extremism. In this context in 2015, we conducted a survey among Moscow college and high school students. The aim of this study was to determine how great or small is the difference in understanding and attitudes towards extremism manifestations, inclination and readiness to take part in extremist activities and what causes this predisposition, if it exists. We performed multivariate analysis and found the Russian college and high school students' opinion about the extremism and terrorism situation in our country and also their cognition on these topics. Among other things, we showed, that the level of aggressiveness of young people were not above the average for the whole population. The survey was conducted using the questionnaire method. The sample included college and high school students in Moscow (642 and 382, respectively) by method of random selection. The questionnaire was developed by specialists of RUDN University Sociological Laboratory and included both original questions (projective questions, the technique of incomplete sentences), and the standard test Dayhoff S. to determine the level of internal aggressiveness. It is also used as an experiment, the technique of study option using of FACS and SPAFF to determine the psychotypes and determination of non-verbal manifestations of emotions. The study confirmed the hypothesis that in respondents' opinion, the level of aggression is higher today than a few years ago. Differences were found in the understanding of and respect for such social phenomena as extremism, terrorism, and their danger and appeal for the two age groups of young people. Theory of psychotypes, SPAFF (specific affect cording system) and FACS (facial action cording system) are considered as additional techniques for the diagnosis of a tendency to extreme views. Thus, it is established that diagnostics of acceptance of extreme views among young people is possible thanks to simultaneous use of knowledge from the different fields of socio-humanistic sciences. The results of the research can be used in a comparative context with other countries and as a starting point for further research in the field, taking into account its extreme relevance.

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I. INTRODUCTION

RADICAL changes are taking place in modern society. Armed conflicts, aggressive attacks and terrorist acts have become part of society and everyday life and cause great concern in all sectors of the population of various countries. Today, we frequently meet with opposition, denial of alternative points of view and it often leads to violent actions. Youth extremism holds a specific place among the existing forms and types of extremism. It emerges from socio-psychological frustration, unemployment, mass protests, etc. Nowadays, extremism is a common phenomenon, but we are interested in the problem of the demonstration of extremism among young people, as well as the attitudes towards extremism in these groups of people – this is emphasis of our study. It is noted that the most dangerous period for involvement in extremist groups is the age of 14 years to 22 years, when young people develop self-actualization and there is a formation of values and life orientations. Under the circumstances, the mind is easily susceptible to any external influences and manipulation. Moreover, at this age the youths are more distracted, emotional and aggressive, which can be defined as the susceptibility to extremist actions. That is why, as a rule, young people, from the age of 14, often enter into extremist groups and movements.

II. EMPIRICAL RESEARCH

A. Sample and Procedure

The study was conducted in February and March 2015. The sample comprised 642 collage and 382 high school students from various educational institutions in different parts of Moscow. Data were collected by a self-administrated questionnaire. The aim of the study was to identify the characteristics of understanding such phenomena as extremism, and its extreme form – terrorism, by young people. Moreover, we tried to identify age-related differences in the understanding and attitude to these phenomena. Despite the fact that the respondents are similar in relation to their demographic characteristics, their perception of the world depends on the characteristics of socialization, education, social surrounding, and the stages of formation of an individual. Thus, the behavior is due to both the social representations and the psychological characteristics of adolescences and youths. Revealing their tolerant attitude towards the manifestation of aggression, propensity to

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participate in the actions of extremists or approval of such actions is an important part of understanding the social and psychological causes of increasing extremism and the relative ease at which young people become involved in such activities.

B. Results

Study participants were asked: "Do you think the level of aggression in society is higher than a few years ago?" The great majority of college students (63.55%) and considerable segment of the high school students (42.5%) sampled agreed that the current level of aggression in society was undoubtedly higher than a few years ago. Slightly more than half of the college students (53.1%) and 60.6% of high school students believe that the problem of terrorism and extremism is actual for Russia.

With regard to the knowledge of college and high school students about extremism and terrorism, we note that for college students' extremism is first and foremost, illegal actions (16.51%), and for the high school students - the forcible imposition of their views (14.17%). The second most important determination for high school students is "illegal activities" (13.65%), and the third – "anti-social ideas". At the same time 12% of college students found it difficult to give a definition of extremism, which shows their lack of knowledge of this phenomenon. The "extremist movements" (10.75%) round out the top three definitions for college students, partly due to ignorance of the concept and the choice of the response based on the semantics of words extremism-extremist. Moscow college students noted that terrorism - is first of all "an attempt to attract attention to his/her views, needs through murder" (22.12%), the same opinion is shared by 13.7% of high school students. However, the key focus is placed on the "form of political activity, a way to control and manipulate" by 16.4% high school students. Another important definition of terrorism was "unjustified cruelty, murder". The same characteristics of terrorism in the survey was given by 13.55% of college students. One more quite popular answer among college students is the description of terrorism as "unlawful acts, crime" (13.86%). Noteworthy is the fact that the lowest percentages of college and high school students consider terrorism as a "way to make money".

We assessed terrorists' motives with the question: "What do you think makes people carry out a terrorist act?" Thus, "mental disorders" (26.0%), "religious fanaticism" (26.1%), and "revenge for the oppression of his/her people" (19.5%) were considered the main reasons cited by college students that cause people to commit terrorist acts. While high school students mentioned "mental disorders" (21.2%), "religious fanaticism" (20.5%) and "blackmail by terrorist organizations" (16.4%) as the main reasons.

Indicative is also the answer to the question: "Could you designate as extremist, the actions that took place in Odessa, May 2, 2014?". Almost half (49.07%) of the college students surveyed and 55% of the high school students said that the events in Odessa last spring could be called extremist.

Meanwhile, 36.45% of college students and 26.25% of the high school students could not answer this question.

As for punitive measures applicable to the extremists, 26.6% of college students and 29.1% of high school students believe that it is permissible to expel from Russia representatives of those states that often commit criminal offenses, including extremism.

Despite the fact that very often the increase in manifestations of extremism is associated in general with increasing aggressiveness in humans and tensions in the world, diagnostics (internal aggression test by S. Dayhoff [1]) showed that young people do not have a high level of internal aggression and it does not exceed the universal norms (increased level of aggressiveness was observed in 8.7% of college students and 4.2% of high school students). However, it is realistic to limit extremism and keep it within bounds by implementing measures at the international, national and regional levels, aimed at harmonizing the aspirations of young people with the trends of society. The transition from short-term and local solutions to strategically ranked medium-term programs in the field of youth policy will enhance the integral potential of this important socio-demographic group (primarily, including the prevention and combating of the youth extremism problem). Currently, youth extremism is growing more rapidly than adult crime.

The main features of youth extremism are growing organization, the formation of groups in the ideological and combat structures, strengthening the measures of secrecy, use of new information and communication technologies to spread their ideology and aid in coordination.

Unrestrained excess energy and potential enthusiasm of youth, the destruction of spiritual values and ideals, existential crisis, fear of the future, feelings of uselessness, isolation and loneliness are serious challenges for many young people in recent years. Youth maximalism, a black-and-white perception of reality, and traditional religious values become the bases for further possible manipulation. Religion appeals to feelings, but not to reason, in extreme forms uses fanatically excited group influence, thanks to which, young men adopt the corresponding ideas and attitudes, find their "true" identity, feel a sense of belonging, as well as a sense of being needed and uniqueness, a selectness of being part of a group. Terrorism uses religious feelings and motivations as a unique tool for the sacralization of its own purposes and acts. Any crime can be considered legitimate from the point of view of religious fanatics. They can turn a terrible criminal, that he actually is, into the performer of the divine act, a great hero, a privileged personality, a holy devotee and martyr. Such reframing allows turning upside down the basic evaluation of the situation. The formation of a real fanatic extremist out of a person, potentially ready for such actions, has already been described in special literature and implies special technology. In addition, there are certain additional factors, which help to hire potential extremists among the youth - virtual reality, computer games.

Considering in this context the possible grounds of subjective motivation of acceptance of extremist/terrorist

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ideology among young people, it is possible to define a number of probable psychological preconditions:

– "Longing for meaning" as a consequence of an acute existential crisis;
– "Melancholy for identity";
– "Melancholy for structure" – need for belonging to the group of friends and presence of the leader – the inspirer organizer;
– thirst for self-realization and self-affirmation;
– need for "strong meanings", heroics, romanticism, up to self-sacrifice; and,
– overcoming boredom, conventionalism, monotony of ordinary existence [3].

However, the tendency of youth to extremism can be defined by not only sociological polls but also referring to methods of criminalistics, psychology and profiling.

III. Profiling Methods for Diagnosing the Tendency to Extreme Views

Profiling is a set of psychological methods and techniques of assessment and forecasting of a person's behavior based on the analysis of the most informative elements: characteristics of appearance, nonverbal and verbal behaviors. In this connection, we offer the option of adaptation of the theory of psychotypes, which originates in the field of psychology and a profiling, to sociological goals. This theory allows the classification of any person from a position of seven main psychotypes, allocating at the same time, the main psychotype (radical) and the accompanying radical. Each psychotype differs from another in important behavioral qualities, including potential for aggression.

The defining of psychotypes is a very difficult responsibility in psychological science; all existing classifications are allocated to specific goals of research. The psychotype consists of specific personal traits. As it is not imperative for sociology to plunge deeply into psychological processes, we find it necessary to define broad categories, which can be used for the classification of the interviewees in sociology. For the allocation of such categories, we use scientific developments of classics of characterology - A.P. Egides [2], V. V. Ponomarenko [3] and approved in practical researches, as well as the classification of psychotypes of the International Academy of Researching Lie [4]. This classification represents the allocation of seven main psychotypes, differing by such criteria as:

• Behavior tendency;
• Speech, and, therefore, thinking;
• Appearance, gesticulation; and,
• Qualities of behavior.

It is important to understand that all of the following terms do not relate to psychiatry (pathological features), but they are the common names of specific features of character, which relate to norm.

• Hysteroid psychological type: They tend, first of all, to self-presentation, the main thing for them is to be in the focus of attention, and they are inclined to be shocking. Their speech is melodious; they are very artistic. They like to wear fashionable and gaudy dress. Egoism is the main feature, but also they are inclined to scandals, skillful liars and manipulators. People who have this psychotype as dominant more often realize their potential in show business or on television.

• Paranoid psychological type: This trend of behavior is to achieve real results; they are very purposeful people. Their speech is persuasive. They often think that the end justifies the means. They are some kind of "revolutionaries" that can do their outmost to achieve a certain goal important for them. Moreover, because of it, other spheres of life and even other people might suffer. They are prone to blackmail. People of this psychotype can realize their potential in politics and top managers.

• Epileptoid psychological type: These people have a routine and hate when it is broken. They seek for the creation of accurately structured living space where unforeseen information streams (excess objects and uncontrollable people) are excluded. Their speech is distinct. They are chilled, but have explosive behavior. They are conservatives, moralizers, but very reliable people. They have a tendency to justice, which is a feature. The main professions of this psychotype are officer, teacher, and doctor.

• Schizoid psychological type: These people want to create something conceptually new. They are inclined to destructing long-standing technologies of behavior (activity, communications) and searching for something original, essentially new. Their speech is faltering. Such people are inflexible, do not feel space well, are badly-coordinated. Their appearance is often untidy, as they forget about themselves while thinking over a new idea. Thinking is specific but inconsistent. In any sphere of life, they are providers of new ideas. They do not fully understand the feelings of another person. They are inclined to express simple ideas in a complicated manner. They are prone to theoretical research and calculations. Often realize their potential in science.

• Hypertimic psychological type: This behavior tendency involves eliminating conventionalities and objectively unnecessary restrictions in the field of communication, expanding and democratization of their circle of contacts. They have fluent speech, a loud voice, are physically active (they are almost incapable of sitting still). They are very active people to whom it is vital to stay in contact with someone, communication is very important for them. They are frequently the main man in any company. However, they differ in superficiality and lack of attachment to something and to someone. They are recklessly courageous and are not able to keep foreign secrets. The hypertimic psychological type lack empathy, but can be sympathetic. They are suited to professions connected with advertising and marketing.

• Emotive psychological type: There people always strive for beauty and harmony, for altruism (one example of a person with the dominating emotive - radical — Mother Teresa). In clothes they prefer muffled tone, have a low

melodious voice, without sudden drop. They are capable not only of understanding, but also of accepting any person, regardless of what he is. They are unprecedentedly kind. They often succeed in the sphere of charity, theater and arts in general.

- Alarming psychological type: The main tendency of people with this psychotype is apprehension. Their life is based on the principal, that everything in dangerous. There are no specific indications in their appearance or behavior. Such type can rarely be found in a pure form, but very often in combination with other types.

Thus, it is possible to claim that people with the dominating epileptoid and hysteroid radical types are potentially more aggressive in their behaviors, than those with schizoid and emotive radical behavior types.

Speaking about the defining tendency to extreme views, we suggest paying greater attention to the nonverbal behaviors of an individual. Nonverbal behavior is also the focus of the sphere of psychology and now of profiling; however, this theme is also actively developing in Russian sociology thanks to the growing number of articles available. This knowledge can be used in sociology through interviews during focus groups and during studies realized by method of observation. The analysis of nonverbal behavior provides useful information for the diagnosis of extremist behavior. In this connection, we highlight the use of the Facial Action Coding System (FACS) as an effective system for taxonomizing every human facial expression and Specific Affect Coding System (SPAFF) for fully encoding all communication.

FACS is a system, and as with any system it has clear units of measurement (facial action), which are called action units (AU). Each Action Unit is considered from different aspects, i.e. the outward appearance (of the muscles), intensity, and symmetry. Intensity is designated according to graduation from poorly distinguishable to limit (from A to F). Symmetry is expressed in AU - unilaterally or bilaterally. Thus, any emotion (for example, a smile) can be coded approximately thus 6C+ L12B, where L before number is unilateral manifestation, in this case left-side, and C and B – expressiveness degree. For our purposes, expressiveness degree practically does not have any value, and therefore we do not use these designations.

SPAFF is the system, which for the first time developed by psychologists J. Gottman and L. Krokoff for systematically observing affective behavior in the context of marital conflict [5]. Basic statements of SPAFF can be found in the article provided in the Handbook of Emotion Elicitation and Assessment. In spite of the fact that the system appeared and was developed in the US, it is now possible to receive training in Russia, conducted by SPAFF expert Mikhail Baev [6]. One of the authors of this paper has completed SPAFF training in Russia. SPAFF became logical continuation of such systems as Marital Interaction Coding System (MICS) [7], the Facial Affect Scoring Technique (FAST) [8], the Couples Interaction Scoring System (CISS) [9], which coded generally separates episodes of interaction, often ignoring at the same time the verbal component. Thus, SPAFF is a more progressive system, which codes all communication (verbal and nonverbal). At the same time, the affect is understood not in the narrow sense, but in the wider sense, as any type of communication with emotional connotations. In order to classify an individual's types of behavior on SPAFF, Gottman says, that the observer needs to develop "active supervision", which is based on three rules:

1) View a behavior as though it were chosen from a collection of possible alternatives;
2) View behavior as if it were designed to portray a character in a play or a film—as if it were written to follow a script;
3) Watch a person as if you were an actor who had to play that person in a film.

In total, there are 18 affects in SPAFF: five – positive, twelve – negative and neutral affects.

It is possible to code any communication and to estimate it from the point of view of efficiency and in the context of extremism assessment using FACS and SPAFF. During focus groups and interviews, the commitment of the respondents to different views is diagnosed, which enables to define their actual attitude in spite of what they say.

The main sense of the article is to show the efficiency of the combination of sociological and psychological approaches to diagnostics of extreme views among youth. The above methods can bring more graceful and simple, but at the same time effective, decisions to this problem.

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