
MODERN RUSSIA: IDEOLOGY, POLITICS, CULTURE AND RELIGION

IGOR KUZNETSOV, ELIZAVETA KULIKOVA, IULIA PETROVA. MASS CULTURE AS AN ENVIRONMENT OF POLITICAL SOCIALIZATION OF YOUTH*

Keywords: mass culture; youth; socialization of youth; cultural artifacts.

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* The article was prepared within the framework of project No. 1022062000240-7, which was implemented at the Institute of Scientific Information for Social Sciences of the Russian Academy of Sciences based on the results of the selection of scientific projects supported by the Ministry of Science and Higher Education of the Russian Federation and the Expert Institute of Social Research.

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Citation: Kuznetsov I., Kulikova E., Petrova I. Mass Culture as an Environment of Political Socialization of Youth // Russia and the Moslem World, 2024, No. 2 (324), P. 5-29. DOI:10.31249/rmw/2024.02.01

Abstract. Currently, mass culture is becoming a significant tool for influencing the consciousness and behavior of the masses, especially young people. The commercialization of mass culture leads to a noticeable decrease in the quality of its content, as well as to the loss of the possibility of any regulatory control in this area, which requires a serious study of exactly which images and meanings of mass culture dominate in the consciousness of Russian young people, how the mechanism of formation of a worldview, the formation of a picture of the world and the formation of their own social identity works. Within the framework of this article, the main approaches to determining the role of mass culture in the process of political socialization of youth in Russia are highlighted: from studies emphasizing the purely targeted nature of the impact of cultural references on youth, to works declaring the comprehensive nature of mass culture. It is concluded that modern approaches to the study of mass culture are largely focused on conceptualization and the search for universal explanations of the principles of its functioning (commercialization, contextuality, general accessibility, the formation of conventions within the framework of communication, etc.). At the same time, the work documents the main intergenerational differences in leisure time and the choice of its specific forms, different for the generation of "fathers" and the generation of "children," which also significantly affects the information and cultural consumption of representatives of different - new generations. At the same time, for young people, the consumption of certain cultural

samples is determined primarily by the availability of relevant artifacts and social influence (fashion, environment, social contacts, etc.).

Issues of political socialization have long been firmly established among the most important in the social sciences. How exactly the formation of a young man, a citizen, an active participant in the political process occurs, is of interest not only to researchers, but is also extremely in demand by practitioners - decision makers. All the more significant and responsible, apparently, should be the means that are used in this process. Traditionally, the strong institutions of political socialization in society were the family, school, the circle of everyday communication of a young man, and the religious community. The last two decades are characterized by an increase in the capabilities of the sphere of mass culture (hereinafter - MC) in this process and, conversely, a noticeable decrease in the influence of traditional institutions. In this regard, it is necessary to take into account not only the formation of new communication channels and their impact on the mass audience, but also the decrease in the authority of direct interaction within the framework of traditional institutions and structures of social communication. Young people receive many primary information, skills, and guidelines in the field of culture faster and more fully even before the influence of family and school, personal circles, neighbors and friends manifests itself in this process.

Within the framework of this article, it is proposed to develop basic approaches to determining the role of mass culture in the process of political socialization of the empirical stage of research on this topic, including a mass survey (using an online survey using a relevant sample) and a series of expert interviews.

The role of mass culture in modern society: from the "elite - mass" antinomy to universal communication

The study of popular culture has been actively conducted in the social sciences since the beginning of the 20th century. Despite the fairly large volume of publications reflecting a wide

variety of theoretical and methodological approaches to the conceptualization of this concept, a strong convention has not yet emerged in a number of areas; the issues of possible boundaries of MC and the influence of individual social actors and institutions on its functioning, the interaction of MC and the so-called high culture, etc. remain debatable. We believe that these questions in general make it possible to propose our own version of the evolution of research approaches and outline the main strategic lines of work for studying the things of interest. Our question is the role of MC in the process of young people's exploration of the space of modern politics. If we turn to the main dimensions of the MC category in the social sciences, we can highlight the following.

Firstly, the definition of mass culture as the antipode of "elite", imperious culture. Theorists of the beginning of the last century spoke from this position, pointing out the obvious differences in the motives of social action of "heroes" and "crowd". The contrast between leaders and masses was intended to point out the different foundations of the political process in the conditions of massization of society, the formation of large social groups focused on participation in political life through the actualization of class, cultural, religious, ethnic and other needs. Thus, in the works of G. Lebon and G. Tarde, some patterns of mass social perception and behavior were formulated, which made it possible to re-evaluate the role of psychological, subjective factors in the formation of a worldview, building social-political strategies of the authorities [Lebon, 1995; Tarde, 2015].

Secondly, MC is often considered as a phenomenon accompanying the development of a modern industrial, mass society. Such a society is developing under the conditions of modernization of production, the emergence of a mass social community – the proletariat engaged in the sphere of material production – the spread of universal literacy and expanded opportunities for political participation (mass press, radio, universal primary or secondary education, cinema, poster art,

etc.). In the works of J. Ortega y Gasset, the problems of “mass society”, focused on equalization, the formation of standards in behavior and consumption, as the antithesis of an elite society, which led to the emergence of the concepts of “mass culture” and “elite culture” is actualized [Ortega y Gasset, 1991a; Ortega y Gasset, 1991b].

Thirdly, one of the most noticeable manifestations of such a culture was the commercialization of both the artifacts, cultural objects themselves, and the entire sphere of its “production.” In the works of representatives of the Frankfurt School and their followers, the development of the critical theory of mass culture occurs [Horkheimer, Adorno, 1997; Marcuse, 2002; Baudrillard, 2020; Benjamin, 1996]. Much attention is paid to the so-called cultural industry, which produces standardized, unified artifacts that are considered novelties, is focused on making a profit and, as such, demonstrates a desire for maximum audience coverage, increasing opportunities to attract everyone's attention and interest. At the same time, such an industrial paradigm minimizes or completely eliminates the artist's personal initiative, limits the freedom of creativity, and dictates certain frameworks for its manifestation through establishing formats, defining trends, or conforming to some successful ideal. Further refraction of the theory of MC can be seen in attempts to establish correlations between the dominant type of culture in society and the trends in the evolution of the political regime [MacDonald, 1990, p. 243–275; Debord, 1999]. For example, in the work of G. Debord, play, staging, and performance are presented not so much as genres of theatrical art, but as a platform for the existence of modern society, where theatricalization is one of the main ways to express a social position and promote relevant interests.

In the second half of the 20th century, in studies of mass culture, more and more attention is paid not only to its passive consumption, but also to human participation in production, the process of creating objects and cultural phenomena. This partly removes the negative connotations characteristic of critical theory,

but at the same time points to important characteristics of the social context – the observed transition from an industrial society to a post-industrial society [Hall, 1980, p. 2–35; Bell, 2004]. The end of the last century and the beginning of the new 21st century are associated with the spread of new means of communication and the emergence of new opportunities for MC [McLuhan, 2004; McLuhan, 2019]. The means of communication themselves (computer, smartphone, etc.) become influential communication tools, exerting, among other things, a powerful influence on the content of the information being broadcast. Expanding the capabilities of storing and reproducing information creates almost unlimited prospects for using a large arsenal of world artistic culture. On the one hand, thanks to the Internet and powerful cloud storages of information, it becomes possible to introduce any person to the most important and significant objects of world culture. On the other hand, these same large-scale information resources significantly “downgrade” the elements of the once “elite” culture, and the achievements of world civilization are “averaged” and, in part, devalued. The owner of a modern gadget, a computer, is inclined to consume relatively simple artifacts, which include detective stories, melodramas, westerns, musicals, comics, etc., which indicates a simplification of art, reducing it to simple models that guarantee success with a mass audience [Castells, 2000; Hevesy, 2001].

Domestic Studies of Popular Culture

In the Russian scientific literature, there is also an intensive discussion of the problems and prospects for the development of mass culture, issues of its conceptualization, determination of the main boundaries and functions are debated. It is worth noting that the Russian experience in this case is of particular interest for two reasons.

Firstly, the study of mass culture in sociology, cultural studies, social psychology and art history is inextricably linked

with determining the characteristics of the evolution of Russian society. The last two decades of the 20th century and the first two current ones are a time of intense socio-political changes, the formation of a new economic model, characterized by a relatively rapid change in the way of life of many citizens, the transformation of the world familiar to them into a new one, causing wariness and anxiety. That is why researchers paid special attention to the possibilities of people's social adaptation to the new reality, strategies for searching for a new identity, and the formation of new communities and structures. A special place in this regard is occupied by studies of the political formation of youth and generational aspects of socialization in general.

Secondly, in recent decades, Russian society has had to go through a difficult path from Soviet ideological monopolism with a one-party system to the post-Soviet model of political competition with constitutional restrictions on state ideology. This path was associated with some high expectations from liberal democracy and the "free market" in the late 1980s and early 1990s, as well as disappointments in the results of reforms that led to radical social transformation with a sharp drop in the level and quality of life. Mass culture in these conditions was a natural environment for political socialization due to its accessibility, relative diversity and commercial attractiveness for investment by the emerging entrepreneurial layer (advertising, promotion and work with target groups were and remain widely popular areas of business development). In addition, it was in the sphere of mass culture that quasi-ideological phenomena began to appear and manifest themselves, contributing to the self-identification of certain socio-political movements (from pro-Soviet nostalgia in the spirit of "Old songs about the main thing" to projects building a new "white" or "red" empire/superpower or implementing a strategy of "entry/return" to the so-called civilized world, the West). Let us also note that in the space of mass culture, the process of forming the personal capital of leaders is the fastest: many of the post-Soviet politicians gained

fame and became recognizable thanks to their active participation in various entertainment projects.

The change in the dominant scientific approach to research of the phenomenon of mass culture has occurred in the domestic scientific literature in a very significant way: from labeling mass culture as a concrete manifestation of the class essence of a bourgeois, capitalist society [Kukarkin, 1985; Nechai, 1984; Culture..., 1990; Raynov, 1979] to its definition as an organic part of the modern post-industrial era, forming new models of social relations [Mass culture..., 2004; Ionin, 1998; Mass culture..., 2005]. In the works of many researchers, mass culture is inextricably linked with modern means of mass communication, which mediate the formation of ideological standards of society, including in the sphere of aesthetics. This view of MC allows us to call it "media culture," which allows us to more accurately correlate the functioning of various content with the creative, professional environment that selects, designs and represents it for the mass consumer.

To systematize approaches to defining MC and fixing its role in modern society, we will group the works of domestic researchers into three main blocks.

The first approach ("mass culture is all-encompassing") is based on the idea that mass culture is universal, which is expressed in its expansive nature and the desire to dominate the sociocultural space by imposing ideas about the morally worthy, aesthetically perfect, socially approved, etc. (or at least claiming such status).

Modern society is under constant pressure from MC due to the impossibility of completely "turning off" or significantly minimizing the influence of the media environment on its functioning. This is manifested in the aggressive promotion of those forms and objects of creativity that allow for increased public attention and thereby create conditions for investment. Thus, the space of mass culture is an aggressive environment of media culture, inextricably linked with communications, and,

therefore, existing within the framework of the accepted normative provisions of this sphere (for example, encouraging diversity and uniqueness, priority of emotional reactions of the public instead of conducting a rational dialogue, minimizing complex content as opposed to promoting light and entertaining, etc.) [Astafieva, 2013, p. 1-8; Ornatskaya, 2001, p. 129-133; Razlogov, 2010; Shapinskaya, 2017]. For example, A.V. Zakharov identifies the main features of modern mass culture: orientation towards the aggressive expansion of visual forms of culture, crowding out book culture; transformation of the information image from printed to visual; merging of the media with manifestations of mass consciousness [Zakharov, 2003, p. 3-16].

Researchers also note the inextricable connection of MC with the existing socio-economic model of society, which very strictly sets the main parameters of development: "mass culture has adopted the main characteristics of industrial society, it has commercial properties, is closely related to the mechanisms of advertising and public relations, so as long as the market economy exists, as long as mass consciousness dominates, mass culture will exist" [Lukov, 2018, p. 53-66]. Let us note that young people are traditionally the most active part of society with regard to the consumption of MC products.

The second approach ("the niche nature of MC, the triumph of marketization") is based on the assumption that the active use of new technologies of commercial advertising, promotion and PR in the field of mass culture forms it as a set of different niches, separate audiences with their own natural demands and resources of free time, attention, etc. This approach focuses on how exactly the MC industry functions based on modern technologies for targeting the target audiences and what market conditions can do with the content and the main forms of manifestation of culture. G.L. Tulchinsky writes: "From now on, values are not developed within society, but are introduced into it. Today tolerance may be revered, tomorrow – religious intolerance, and the day after tomorrow – individualistic

hedonism. And accordingly, various image figures and symbols will be promoted. Today – some, tomorrow – others, the day after tomorrow – others. Fame is created manipulatively, with the help of the media and for money. ... Mass culture is perhaps the first cultural formation in the history of mankind, devoid of a transcendental dimension, of any apophatic nature, but completely and exclusively cataphatic. If something supernatural appears in it, then, firstly, it is described specifically and literally like a description of the consumer qualities of a product, and secondly, this supernatural is subordinated to completely earthly goals and is used in solving the most whatever earthly needs are” [Tulchinsky, 2006, p. 54–66]. This vision of MC allows us to evaluate the success of specific practices in the field of culture, develop approaches to increasing their effectiveness based on the achievements of modern marketing, reputation management and advertising. The loss of the individual’s opportunities for natural self-determination can be considered the flip side of this process: “Personal self-determination turns into a factor that provides the illusion of choice. Identity, self-awareness of the individual, her

“I” (myself) dissolves in the objectivity of the myth of mass culture. Mass culture and its artifacts are a holistic and well-integrated system, capable of permanent self-reproduction. This is a self-reproducing mass personology, or personological mass” [Tulchinsky, 2006, p. 54–66].

The third approach (“mass culture as a convention”) seeks to see in MC a platform of communication that unites society: everyone discusses topics that concern them in the language that is commonly used. And this, as a rule, is the language of memes, symbols, speech patterns, which form a certain agreement between the participants in communication, allowing them to find understanding and indicate involvement in the problem under discussion. In this form, MC looks like it is extremely dependent on the current state of mass communications and the dominant ideas in them. The contextuality of these ideas, the emotional intensity of certain judgments and statements

encourages the involvement of interested participants and the formation of specific positions. At the same time, such communication has no restrictions for entry: everyone who is capable of the appropriate format of communication can participate and declare their own position (and the most talented can create their own communication platforms in the form of chats, blogs, video channels and podcasts). Some researchers do not exclude the hierarchical structure of mass culture, where different levels of communication with different communication styles can simultaneously coexist. So, according to A.N. Ilyin, “mass culture is not an attribute only of the masses, but acts as a cultural space for the entire society as a whole – the so-called modern mass society” [Ilyin, 2009, p. 67–75].

Of particular interest is the concept of the morphological structure of culture, in which the following structural units are distinguished: everyday culture, mastered by a person in the process of his general socialization in his/her living environment; specialized culture, the development of which requires special (professional) education; popular culture as occupying an intermediate position between these cultures with the function of a translator of cultural meanings [Orlova, 2004; Orlova, 2012].

So, modern approaches to the study of mass culture are largely focused on conceptualization and the search for universal explanations of the principles of its functioning (commercialization, contextuality, general accessibility, the formation of conventions within the framework of communication, etc.). For the purposes of our research, the emphasis on the complexity and comprehensiveness of this phenomenon is of particular importance, since MC can have a powerful impact on the processes of political socialization of young citizens and shape their worldview. In addition, the issues of functioning of specific images and symbols of MC in conditions of developed communication and the ability to control this process remain extremely important.

The Cultural Space of Modern Youth: between Entertainment and Education

The formation of the worldview and civic qualities of modern youth takes place under the powerful influence of the entire environment of mass communications on these processes. This is one of the features of the cultural situation today, since until quite recently not everyone could have mobile, broadband access to the Internet and the ability to watch videos, listen to audio files and read electronic texts. In addition, these processes are actively influenced by the very format of using computers and mobile devices. Their miniature size, mobile ergonomics and powerful capabilities largely ensure almost daily use in the “background practice” mode (when a person views, listens, flips through materials or searches for information while simultaneously carrying out some other activity – movement in transport, sports, household chores and even the educational process). Modern software has long been working in accordance with algorithms that are able to adapt to the interests and needs of the user, taking into account the characteristics of his network activity and even his life schedule.

The development of cultural space by young people occurs inextricably with the formation of the semantic foundations of self-regulation. In his work a Russian sociologist of the early 20th century P.A. Sorokin proposed the following version of the reconstruction of this process. Basic types of culture contain stable concepts with a set of fundamental values that are at the center of the thesaurus of most carriers of a given culture; they are not realized, but “emerge in the form of ideas about certain problems or objects, prompting people to commit actions, determining their direction and predetermining the perception of the world” [Sorokin, 2000, p. 11]. Thus, young people organically integrate into the sociocultural space, using the entire arsenal of specific concepts based on basic values.

Let us note that the factor of historical inertia poses a particular difficulty for the analysis of the topic of this research: the large-scale socio-political changes that took place in our country at the turn of the 20th–21st centuries could not but affect the processes of political socialization of youth. The “fathers” (generations of baby boomers and those close to them in age) had a difficult adaptation to the “market” and political pluralism, while the “children” (those who were born at the end of the USSR and in the new Russia) had to master the basics of the social system without the pioneers and the Komsomol, in a completely different environment of mass culture, where, along with domestic achievements, world ones are actively represented. We also emphasize that today’s diversity of sources and forms of broadcasting MC has helped to create a much wider range of choices in areas of interest.

Various phenomena and forms of culture, art and creativity that young people have to deal with in everyday life are reflected in their consciousness, leave a certain trace, thereby forming the cultural space of the individual, influencing the general level of development of intelligence, memory, imagination. Being in dialogue with the outside world, young citizens develop their own outline of interaction, communication, and assimilate existing samples and patterns of social behavior. Yu.A. Zubok writes: “Implementing his intentions, a young man is in certain conditions that are set by institutional discourse and at the same time regulated by cultural patterns and meanings, due to which self-regulatory processes in the youth environment have both general and individual traits” [Self-regulation..., 2022, p. 221]. In this regard, some researchers prefer to see in such work not only young people’s search for their identity, but also the formation of new directions for self-realization that claim to be independent, effective ways of creativity, choosing a profession, building a business or personal brand. For example, a team of researchers led by E.A. Omelchenko uses the concept of “youth cultural scenes,” which allows us to characterize the complex

process of choice and self-determination of a young person today [Molodezh..., 2020].

This process largely depends on the communication of young people with their peers and friends, since it is in communication with those who are close in age and social status that a number of basic ideas, meanings, and images are determined that capture picture of the world and empower its bearers with the ability to adequately perceive the social situation. At the same time, experts point out that young people can choose from several basic, typical strategies for such communication, among them: an innovative option (focus on activity, enterprise, novelty); physical development (healthy lifestyle, cult of health, cult of the body); spiritual (activation of spiritual life); hedonistic (the desire to get as much pleasure as possible); adaptive (the need to save in everything, adapt to changing conditions); moral anomie (denial of moral norms, “everyone has their own morals”).

These typical strategies generally lead to the assimilation of the norms of some individual subcultures, but at the same time, identification also presupposes the assimilation of basic cultural patterns through education, the educational system, independent creative activity and communication. This allows you to form an identity with several generations at once – at least parents and peers.

The cultural space of modern youth is very diverse, distinguished by many options for choosing an individual life and creative trajectory of self-realization. At the same time, it imposes serious restrictions on this very act of choice. And the point here is not that there are different opportunities determined by different social status, place of residence, income or education. Rather, there is a relatively new social situation here for Russia: such a choice has to be made in conditions of increasing uncertainty, high risks and consideration of alternatives that are hardly acceptable for society as a whole (for example, quite popular, unfortunately, the strategy of young specialists leaving the country). In addition, there is another aspect that

distinguishes the current model of behavior of young people from their parents: young people have to choose from a very large menu, a variety of options and strategies that can be very attractive. Therefore, preferring some alternative, a young man after a short time begins to understand that he missed at least ten other options, which can be very tempting. It is often difficult to understand that they are no better than the choice that has already been made. In essence, we are talking about a frustrated consciousness, disappointment in one's own capabilities or in the world around us; there appear requests for "collecting impressions" through a constant search for novelty, what is relevant, and what is fashionable.

A big role here is played by the powerful pressure of the media environment on young people and their active network communication. The choice of young people is always mediated by a kaleidoscope of alternatives, their competition, the clash of versions of one or another option of life, creative and cultural preferences. In online communication, any significant goal can not only be challenged, but also subject to ridicule, devalued, which can lead to mental discord and depression [Kuznetsov, 2021, p. 237-252]. The possible range of reactions to such communicative situations with serious consequences is very wide: from escapism and refusal of activity altogether to procrastination and suicide.

Young Russians are actively interested in events and phenomena of mass culture, follow current trends in art and fashion, and try to "be in trend" by observing the creativity and network activity of famous people and leaders of public opinion. Researchers who turned to the analysis of cultural consumption of the "millennial" generation note an interesting trend – the young people's attraction to cultural products and general (non-applied) humanitarian knowledge. This is due not only to the desire to expand one's horizons and understand the current context, but mainly to the need for self-development outside the professional environment. V.V. Radaev believes that in this case

we can observe the desire of young people to combine pragmatism (orientation towards maximizing the acquisition of necessary skills and competencies in the profession) and “typical cultural consumption” as a sphere of additional opportunities for self-realization: “... a craving for Humanitarian knowledge (for example, history) does not, as a rule, concern professional pursuits (most people have no desire to become a professional historian), but is a means of individualization and one’s own self-development in a non-professional environment” [Radaev, 2020, p. 191–192].

The most intensive appeal to culture among young people is associated with leisure, practices of spending free time. Sociologists note that in this area young people strive to satisfy aesthetic, emotional, cognitive needs, and hedonistic aspirations. Among such practices, the following spectacular forms of cultural consumption stand out: watching TV shows and videos, listening to music; shopping; visiting cinemas, stadiums, sports shows, theaters, concerts, museums (see table 1). Being very diverse in content and form of inclusion, these practices shape the lifestyle and characteristics of self-identification of young people [Zubok, Chuprov, 2018, p. 170–191].

The same study notes that based on the data obtained, it is possible to clarify the hierarchy of cultural needs of young people. Communication with friends dominates here (more than 60 per cent); passive relaxation watching TV – almost half of respondents (47.9 per cent); every third person prefers to communicate on the Internet in social networks (32.3 per cent); every fourth person listens to music, watches videos (24.4 per cent); every fifth – activities with children (19.4 per cent); visiting a bar, club and cinema (18.4 per cent) and only 12.3 per cent choose reading, and 6.8 per cent go to the theater [Zubok, Chuprov, 2018, p. 170–191].

Table 1

Types of youth activities in their free time, per cent

Types of activity	Distribution of answers		
	Never / Rarely	Often	Regularly
Housekeeping, childcare	32,9	36,5	30,6
Walks	14,6	52,6	32,8
Fiction reading	55,4	34,5	10,1
Visiting and receiving guests	31,6	56,2	12,2
Artistic creativity and design	70,6	21,3	8,1
Watching TV, videos, listening to music	13,8	55,8	30,4
Amateur artistic activity, clubs, classes, sport groups	78,8	14,7	6,5
Attending theatres, concerts, museums	68,9	25,0	6,1
Attending cinemas	39,6	48,6	11,8
Attending discos, parties, dance parties	67,2	25,3	7,5
Communication with friends	7,0	48,8	44,2
Visiting stadiums, sport shows	67,9	23,9	8,2
Shopping	20,0	57,7	22,3
Sports, tourism	54,0	31,4	14,6
Spending time in Internet, networks	10,8	45,3	43,9
Receiving additional education	78,5	15,5	6,0
Attending a church, a mosque	81,2	15,5	3,2

Source: [Zubok, Chuprov, 2018, p. 170–191].

If we imagine the dynamics of cultural preferences of young people in a generational aspect, a very interesting and contrasting picture emerges. As noted by Yu.A. Zubok and V.I. Chuprov, in a 1967 study of Soviet youth, to the question “how do you spend your free time?” the following answers were received: “I am engaged in rationalization, invention” – 3 per cent; “I write stories, stories, poems” – 4 per cent; “I draw, cut bones, embroider” – 8 per cent; “I do photography, make amateur films” – 14 per cent; “I play musical instruments” – 12 per cent; “I take part in amateur performances” – 11 per cent; “I go in for sports, tourism” – 27 per cent; “I play chess” – 28 per cent; “spend with friends” – 28 per cent; “I visit cinemas and theaters” – 27 per cent; “I study at home or in the library” –

28 per cent; “I read fiction” – 68 per cent [Zubok, Chuprov, 2018, p. 170–191].

These data demonstrate a noticeable increase in the current share of passive leisure, when young people spend time at home watching TV or on the Internet. Most likely, this also means relatively less time spent in direct, personal communication with peers (which cannot but affect the formation of appropriate communication skills among young people). In addition, the structure of the needs of the generation of “fathers” clearly expresses the desire for activity, self-development, improvement in a profession or hobby. For “children” this is replaced by the need for entertainment. Apparently, in this regard, the nature of expectations from certain institutions and cultural institutes is changing: a noticeable demand for theater and classical music carries a largely hedonistic position (getting impressions, pleasure is more important, than to pose new questions for yourself or to find out something hitherto unknown).

Network communication and searching for information in the Internet are now very powerfully crowding out reading literature, going to the theater, museum, or concert. Finally, it is worth noting that the current sociocultural situation is very different from the late Soviet era, not only in the absence of state ideology and the corresponding system of political education, upbringing, etc. (see Table 2). Nowadays there is practically no authoritative regulation of the cultural needs of young people. Young people themselves choose certain forms of cultural consumption, often without relying on established socially prescribed and sanctioned patterns. Such a choice is greatly influenced by the communities in which young people communicate and those leaders of public opinion who are considered leaders in them.

Research by Russian sociologists from the Institute of Sciences of the Russian Academy of Sciences confirms noticeable generational changes in leisure preferences: “Youth, as the most dynamically responsive group to everything that is not

considered traditional, shows the greatest activity in the development of new opportunities. possibilities and forms of spending free time" [Gorshkov, Sheregi, 2020, p. 264].

Intergenerational differences in spending leisure time and choosing its specific forms are also recorded by V.V. Radaev. Defining millennials as the current, modern generation of youth, he compares them with older ones (the mobilization (military) generation, the "thaw" generation and the "stagnation" generation). For example, "the youngest adult generation listens to music, audio books, and watches videos much more often than all older generations – more than half of millennials of both sexes do this almost every day (53 per cent) (in the reform generation only every third of them (32 per cent), and among older generations – 18 per cent)" [Radaev, 2020, p. 87], "quite expectedly, millennials are much more likely to play on the computer and spend time on the Internet, two-thirds of them (65 per cent) do this daily, while in the reform generation this share drops to 42 per cent, and in older generations it drops abruptly to almost zero (on average for the three older generations – 17 per cent)" [Radaev, 2020, p. 87]. "Millennials differ little in the frequency of reading books – in all the generations we identified, regardless of age, slightly more than one in three read books almost every day. But gender differences among millennials are quite significant – significantly more women are involved in reading books. Let us add that, apparently, the form of reading is changing – we are increasingly talking about electronic books" [Radaev, 2020, p. 89]. It is worth mentioning separately the massive use of audiobooks by young Russians at present, which can also be attributed to a relatively new form of "background practices", and not just a leisure pastime. Thus, according to a Mediascope study, in 2022, about 33 per cent of Russian citizens aged 12 to 64 years listen to audiobooks on at least one device (smartphone or PC). At the same time, there are more women in the structure of listeners than in the population (55 per cent versus 51 per cent), but fewer

than in the structure of online readers; 15 per cent of those who listen to audiobooks bought a subscription to an online service, and 13 per cent prefer one-time purchases [Search for books on the Internet... 2022].

Table 2

**The main occupations of the population
in their free time, per cent**

Occupation	USSR (1982)	Russia (2014)
Watching TV	85	72
Listening to music	66	38
Reading newspapers and magazines	83	34
Communication with friends, acquaintances	74	58
Reading books	78	39
Household chores	68	52
Just rest	32	49
Attending discos, clubs (in 1982 – attending dance evenings in a club)	38	8
Attending cinemas, concerts	79	22
Computer (including on the Internet)	–	47
Visiting cafes, bars	–	17
Sports (including fitness)	38	12
Additional educational classes	42	12
Hobbies, interests	30	21
Hobby groups	12	3

Source: [Gorshkov, Sheregi, 2020, p. 266].

The structure of leisure time for modern youth is such that young people spend most of this time passively (watching TV – 64 per cent, listening to music – 58 per cent, sitting at the computer – 45.9 per cent, “doing nothing” – 49.6 per cent). Among active forms, communication (meetings) with friends and walks in nature stand out (46 per cent). The proportion of young people who attend church in their free time has become relatively large – 8.1 per cent. Next in the preferences of young people are reading the press, magazines, books; visiting discos, sports clubs, cinema; housework, hobbies (handicrafts, modeling, caring for animals). Among the noticeable generational changes is the

gradual disappearance of such forms as participation in the work of interest groups, in the work of public and political organizations [Gorshkov, Sheregi, 2020, p. 270] (see table 3).

Table 3

**The structure of leisure time
for young people aged 14–30 years, per cent**

Meet and communicate with friends at home or away	65,1
Watch TV, listen to radio broadcasts	64,3
Listen to music, read books, watch videos	58,2
Just resting, relaxing	49,6
Spend time in nature, take walks	46,1
Are interested in computers, the Internet, play computer games	45,9
Take care of housework, children, dacha	29,1
Read newspapers, magazines	28,3
Attend cafes, bars, restaurants	28,1
Attend discos, nightclubs, and other entertainment events	26,5
Attend theaters, concerts, cinema	26,5
Attend sports clubs, sections, training sessions	20,3
Take additional classes for education and professional training	12,6
Hobby for home (handicrafts, photography, modeling)	11,5
Attend church and other religious meetings	8,1
Attend museums, exhibitions, opening days	6,8
Participate in various clubs and interest clubs (music, dancing)	3,7
Participate in the work of public organizations, meetings, associations	2,5
Attend political organizations, meetings, rallies	0,9

Source: [Gorshkov, Sheregi, 2020, p. 270].

A separate very important question is what exactly in mass culture young citizens prefer, what they are passionate about when accessing the Internet, TV, cinema, theater, books, etc. Such studies have also been carried out (see: [Gorshkov, Sheregi, 2020]), and highlighting individual trends in the formation of

cultural preferences in specific age groups of respondents. However, along with this, it is necessary, in our opinion, to seriously clarify which exactly images and the meanings of mass culture dominate in the consciousness of Russian youth, how the mechanism of worldview formation, the formation of a picture of the world and the formation of their own social identity works.

Let's summarize some results. Indeed, modern societies are turning into "leisure societies" – a particular type of consumer society. Centralized media create attractive lifestyle models, centered on the consumption of entertainment and goods" [Ilyin, 2010, p. 25–47]. Along with the media, mass culture is an equally powerful tool for influencing the consciousness and behavior of the masses, especially young people. The commercialization of mass culture leads to a noticeable decrease in the quality of its content (support and dissemination is mainly found in what is accessible, understandable and attractive to the majority), as well as to the loss of the possibility of any regulatory control in this area (with the exception of direct constitutional prohibitions on the propaganda of social, national, religious and other hostility and intolerance, and propaganda of violence, until recently there were almost no strict restrictions in this area in Russia). Nevertheless, the role of MC in the political socialization of young people is very large. And the preferences in information and cultural consumption of young people are largely determined by the availability of relevant artifacts and social influence (fashion, environment, social contacts...). In addition, the possibility of an adequate dialogue with young people about so-called difficult issues can be significantly enhanced by the choice of means of communication and adaptation of the content of relevant messages.

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Received: 06.10.2023.

Accepted for publication: 16.10.2023.