

Chapter 10

Positive Psychology in Russia

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Russia has always had strong intellectual traditions. Since the 1930's some ideological isolation was added to this; for this reason, for better or for worse, psychology in Russia through the last 80 years has been influenced by the world mainstream psychology less than in other European countries and was more based on indigenous grounds.

Happiness has never been the focus of human strivings in Russia. A popular line by Alexander Pushkin (1799–1837), who is acknowledged as the Russian poet most representative of the “Russian soul,” culture, and mentality of modern age, goes: “There is no happiness on Earth, only peace and will.” Since the Russian population at large has never lived in comfortable conditions, it is a bearable level of difficulty, rather than enjoyment, that is considered “normal” in this country. When the first author visited the U.S.A. and used his standard way of approving things by saying “not bad,” it surprised American colleagues for whom only “fine” was OK. But if one’s reference point is “bad,” then “not bad” is definitely good. If “good” is taken for granted, the whole scale is different. As articulated by a person from Poland (where the mentality is rather close to the Russian one in this respect): “When Americans say it was great, I know it was good. When they say it was good, I know it was okay. When they say it was okay, I know it was bad” (quoted after Wierzbicka, 2004, p. 41). Levontina & Zalizniak (2001, p. 297) go on to state, “Indeed, the difference between the Russian *sčastliv*, *sčast’e* and the English *happy*, *happiness* is so great that it makes one doubt whether it is right to regard these words

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as translation equivalents.” They note that, unlike English “happiness,” which denotes an everyday emotion, the Russian “schastye” refers to an existential ideal, and the Russian word “dovolen” (“content”) would be a closer equivalent to “happy”.

However, another aspect of positive living, namely, meaning, was highly relevant in Russia at all times. Meaning was at the center of discussions of Russian religious philosophers of the late 19 h-early twentieth century. The most prominent of them was Nikolai Berdyaev. These philosophers criticized the utilitarian statement that human life is about happiness, stating instead that it is about meaning. Their argumentation on this topic was very close to the one put forth by Victor Frankl several decades later (see Leontiev, 2005 for details). In Russian psychology the role of meaning in the regulation of activity and cognitive processes was systematically investigated in the 1970s–1980s. This then relates to another important original tradition, rather influential in Russia today, of the psychology of self-regulation.

We shall begin with the historical and cultural context influencing both the intellectual tradition and everyday mentality of Russians. The second section of the chapter will discuss the role of positive emotions in Russian life and culture based on available survey data and cross-cultural findings. The third section will provide a brief review of recent research relevant to Positive Psychology.

Positive Ideas in Russian Intellectual Tradition

The folk conceptions of happiness in traditional Russian culture are emotionally ambivalent. The Russian word for “happiness” is “schastye”, which is etymologically related to “uchast”, “one’s lot” (see Dzhidaryan, 2013). The dialectic relationship and interplay of positive and negative sides of life in Russian mentality is perfectly articulated in proverbs and sayings, such as “There would be no happiness if unhappiness did not help it,” “There is no evil without some good in it,” and “Escaping from grief—meeting no happiness.” Happiness thus appears as a result of overcoming difficulties and suffering, a kind of compensatory award.

Philosophical analysis of the Russian notion of happiness describes it as an interplay of the concepts of joy, fate, and activity (Lapukhina, 2006). The emotional aspect of happiness refers to a merry celebration of enjoyment that people strive to share with their fellows. The irrational nature of Russian happiness is manifested in its reliance on fate, God, or good luck. Predestination is also important, as illustrated by another proverb: “Don’t come handsome into the world, but come happy.” However, personal activity is also seen as important in attaining and maintaining happiness: “Everyone is a blacksmith of one’s happiness” (Kupchenko, 2012). In other words, Russian happiness is hardly possible without some activity.

For centuries, Orthodox Christianity dominated Russian intellectual life to a much greater degree than its Catholic and Protestant counterparts did in Western Europe. Before the nineteenth century, one can hardly find any philosophical endeavors in Russia transcending the religious agenda, let alone developing

independently of it (though the issues of Russian identity and national destiny were combined with it in some cases). The great Russian writers (above all, Leo Tolstoy and Fyodor Dostoyevsky) were more broad-minded and influential than Russian philosophers in their discussion of philosophical and psychological issues. This is why the work of many Russian philosophers of the early twentieth century stems from Tolstoy and Dostoyevsky, rather than from the Western European philosophical tradition.

Tolstoy's *My Confessions* was probably the first intellectual analysis of the problem of meaning in European thought. The book was completed in 1882 but was prohibited from being published because of the author's critical stance toward the official religion, and it was only in 1906 that it appeared in print for the first time. In mature adulthood, at the peak of his success and happiness, the author (then a very popular writer with growing international fame, financial security and a loving family) found himself facing the question, "What is the meaning of life?" (Tolstoy, 1983, p. 115). After a long period of seeking some answer, Tolstoy made two main discoveries that he explicated in this essay. First, many thinkers had tried to figure out what a good life should be, aiming to arrive at a universally valid answer. Tolstoy had also tried this approach (and failed) until he came to a realization that the question about the meaning of life can only be posed with respect to an individual life of one's own. The second insight was that meaning is a matter of living, rather than that of reflection; meaningful living is a precondition for a meaning of life. Tolstoy concluded: "What is necessary for making sense of life is, first of all, that the life itself be not meaningless and not evil, and then, after this, the reason to understand it" (ibid., p. 147).¹ These two insights also underlie some of the later psychological theories of life meaning (Adler, 1980; Frankl, 1973).

Probably the deepest source of Tolstoy's philosophical insights is his *Philosophical Journal*, which contains the notes made by the writer for himself between 1901 and 1910, the year of his death (Tolstoy, 2003). The starting point of his meditations was the distinction between inauthentic life, which lacks the genuine properties of living but is nevertheless called "life" by the majority, and the "isles" of authentic life. In fact, Tolstoy distinguished three, rather than two, kinds of life: "(1) vegetative, unconscious life; (2) life in the awareness of oneself as a separate being; (3) life in the awareness of oneself as a divine essence within the limits of a person" (Tolstoy, 2003, p. 22). The question *Why live?* is the central one; all of a person's beliefs stem from the answer to this question (ibid., p. 30).

Dostoyevsky's intellectual agenda was, in part, similar to that of Tolstoy. He also denied passive happiness, devoid of meaning and effort: "People should understand that there is no happiness in idleness, that ineffective thought will fade, that one cannot love one's neighbor without giving to him, that living without contributing is abominable and that *happiness consists in the pursuit of happiness, rather than in happiness itself*" (Dostoyevsky, 1989, p. 136).

¹All the translations from Russian sources are made by the authors.

Tolstoy and Dostoyevsky gave a strong impetus to the generation of philosophers active at the turn of the century. The so-called Russian religious philosophy of the late 19th—early 20th centuries grew from Orthodox Christian roots and took the form of a mighty stream of moral philosophy teachings, starting from the 1890s. In the early 1920s, all of the outstanding representatives of this tradition were forced to emigrate. Although they continued their work in exile until the 1950s, their most important writings date back to the period between 1890 and 1930. The most prominent of these authors, who failed to draw a borderline between philosophical and religious discourse, were Vladimir Soloviev, Rev. Sergey Bulgakov, Lev Karsavin, Evgeny Trubetskoi, Semen Frank, Lev Shestov, Vassily Rozanov, Nikolai Losskiy, and Nikolai Berdyaev; they represent the whole spectrum of discourses, from mystical and irrational ones to those modern and rational. Many (though not all) teachings within this tradition explicitly depart from the Christian ideal, seen as the only alternative to utilitarian ethics. A common theme for many of these authors was the criticism of the utilitarian “striving for happiness” principle of human conduct; the principle of striving for meaning was proposed instead.

The criticism of the utilitarian moral philosophy based on the idea of *eudemonia* takes a substantial place in the writings of many representatives of this tradition. No ethics can be deduced from the pursuit of happiness principle, because the concept of happiness, like those of utility and pleasure, has no moral nature in itself (Vladimir Soloviev, as quoted by Tareev, 1901/1994, p. 134). Many authors considered the idea of happiness as being too indefinite to be a guiding principle of human conduct. Mikhail Tareev stated that all kinds of mutually contradictory teachings followed from the happiness principle (Tareev, 1901/1994, p. 134), Rozanov noted that this principle does not state what object should activity focus on, in order to provide satisfaction. “‘Happiness’ is a general term, in which an indefinite multitude of separate goals are merged together, the goals that a human being sets for him/herself every minute and feels satisfied, i.e. happy, when reaches them’ (Rozanov, 1892/1994, p. 41). Berdyaev (1931b/1993) has even called happiness “the most meaningless of all human words. No criterion and no measure for happiness does exist, and no comparison of the happiness of one person to the happiness of another is possible” (p. 77).

Not only logical considerations, but also, paradoxically, ethical ones made the idea of happiness unacceptable for moral philosophy. Berdyaev points at the inevitable conflict between freedom and happiness (*ibid.*, p. 99), at the connection of the striving for happiness to the fear of losing it. “Eudemonistic ethics, be it earthly or heavenly eudemonism, is, in the end, the ethics of fear, for the person is anxious about the happiness of one’s own and that of others; the happiness is subject to dangers from all directions and is bought at the price of opportunism in judgment and action. If I have set happiness as the goal for myself, I am doomed to fear all the time” (*ibid.*, p. 157). Moreover, a stable and enduring happiness is hardly possible in our world; hence, people who are too happy, quiet, and satisfied, appear as shallow, limited in their strivings, indifferent to human suffering, and self-satisfied. “Bliss, the state of paradise, bothers us as a stop in the movement of the spirit, as the cessation of the endless striving and seeking, as self-satisfaction and indifference to the grief of

others and to the existence of hell. The state of paradise means nurturance from the tree of life and ignorance of the good and the evil. . .” (ibid., p. 247–248).

Some of the teachings belonging to this tradition proposed meaning as the guiding principle, alternative to that of pleasure or happiness. This fundamental opposition was most clearly conceptualized by Vassily Rozanov (1892/1994): “Twofold may be human life: unconscious and conscious. The former is conceived as life governed by *causes*; the latter as life governed by *a goal*” (p. 21). In the context of unconscious life, consciousness plays a technical function, helping to define the ways of conduct and find the easiest paths; in conscious life, consciousness plays a central part, as it chooses the direction of the succession of acts and arranges them according to a plan.

Goal and meaning are often seen in this tradition as essentially the same. “Questioning on the meaning of life is the same as questioning on the valuable life goal” (Vvedenski, 1896/1994, p. 98). Having analyzed the notions of meaning and goal from the logical standpoint, Alexander Vvedenski concluded that meaning of anything lies necessarily beyond the thing itself. “It is logically justified to believe in the meaning of life only in case we believe that our life is a way leading us to an absolutely valuable goal located outside our life and fulfilled through its mediation” (ibid. p. 100). This transcendent quality is an important feature of life meaning, or life goal. “A judgment from the standpoint of meaning always presupposes elevation over the object of judgment” (Berdyayev, 1931b/1993, p. 37). This is why human beings may bear suffering, inasmuch as the latter has meaning: “The suffering, meaning and goal of which are within awareness, is quite different from the suffering without goal and meaning” (Berdyayev, 1931a/1992, p. 91). In a special paper (Leontiev, 2005) we analyzed the similarity of these arguments to V. Frankl’s later criticism of the pleasure principle.

The Soviet era (1917–1991) was the time of monopolistic Marxist ideology. The ideological control became total in the early 1930s, though the pressure on non-Marxist thinkers started earlier. It was an ideology of collectivism and of self-sacrifice for the sake of the future ideal Communist society. Everyone was to become happy once Communism would be established; before this, an awareness of contributing to this process was enough. There were no other valid reasons to be happy and this was a reason for a Russian to be happy, no matter how hard the circumstances. A meme coined by a character from a very popular movie *Pokrovsky Gate* (filmed in the 1980s but describing the 1950s), goes: “One should live for conscience, not for enjoyment.” A more or less notable economic improvement and emerging interest for individual consumption that facilitated a more hedonistic worldview only became apparent in the 1960s.

In the USSR until the 1990s, social conformism was seen as good and critical thinking as bad; hence, there was no space for positive ideas in psychology. At the same time, the ideas of meaning, activity, and self-regulation as mechanisms underlying specifically human forms of conduct have been at the center of post-war Soviet psychology, based on Lev Vygotsky’s ideas of higher, mediated, forms of human functioning, Nikolai Bernstein’s models of self-regulation, and Alexei N. Leontiev’s activity theory approach and his theory of personal meaning.

What Is Russian Happiness? Positive Emotions and Emotional Regulation in Russian Mind

Visitors to Russia often form the impression that Russians are restrained or even gloomy: shopkeepers, subway-riders, public officials tend to be stony-faced and often bad-tempered. Travel blogs keep asking the question “Why Don’t Russians Smile?” (Golubeva, 2014; Sternin, 2015). Such experiences and anecdotes raise the question of whether Russians are universally less happy, compared to members of Western cultures.

In international comparative studies Russia typically demonstrates below-average well-being scores (Diener, 2000; Diener & Oishi, 2004) that are also significantly below the expectations based on economic indicators alone (Inglehart et al., 2008). Systematic country-level research on well-being in the USSR was impossible for political reasons: according to Communist party propaganda, all Soviet citizens were expected to welcome their life with “a feeling of deep satisfaction” (Dushenko, 1996). The only available findings from the Tambov region (later shown to be representative of the country as a whole) indicate that in 1982 the reported levels of life satisfaction in the USSR were quite high, on par with Western European countries, such as Spain and West Germany, only slightly below the levels of the USA and Sweden, and significantly above the expectations based on GDP.

However, life satisfaction declined throughout the 1980s and 1990s (from above 7 to 4.4 on an 11-point scale), placing Russia among the world’s least-satisfied countries by the end of the 1990s (Inglehart et al., 2008). This drop can be explained by the traumatic experience of economic decline and social upheaval associated with the downfall of the Communist system (e.g., changing expectations, insecurity, rising social inequality); a similar picture was seen in many other ex-Communist countries. In a contrasting finding, however, Inglehart’s (2010) data suggest that the effects of socioeconomic transition in these countries on happiness and life satisfaction were quite different, with very little detrimental effect on happiness. However, most studies use either life satisfaction as a proxy for SWB or combine happiness with life satisfaction in an overall SWB index, demonstrating a pronounced negative trend.

In Russia this negative well-being trend reversed at the end of the 1990s (Inglehart, 2010). Recent findings from representative samples show that levels of life satisfaction in Russia have been steadily rising (Helliwell et al., 2016; Veenhoven, 2017), with the improvement of economic situation, but the present levels are still below those seen in Soviet times. Although economic indicators offer a tempting simple explanation for the dynamics of Russian well-being (Veenhoven, 2001), the average living standards and life expectancy in contemporary Russia are comparable to or above the late-USSR levels (Yasin et al., 2011; Ovcharova et al., 2014). Why then are the well-being levels still much lower? Economists observe this discrepancy in many countries and typically describe it in terms of paradoxes (Graham et al., 2010), such as the “paradox of unhappy growth” (growth is associated with rising inequality and insecurity) or the “happy peasant and frustrated

achiever paradox” (growth is associated with frustration as a result of rising expectations).

Indeed, on the one hand, Russian levels of income inequality are quite high; about half of the Russians are not satisfied with their income (Ovcharova et al., 2014). On the other hand, traditional Russian culture views economic troubles as a normal situation, expressed in sayings like “Не в деньгах счастье” (“Happiness is not about money”), “Не имей сто рублей, а имей сто друзей” (“A hundred friends is better than a hundred rubles”), “Не до жиру, быть бы живу” (“You have to be happy with what you’ve got, since richness is unattainable”). One socioeconomic study has found a paradoxical association of rising unemployment with rising life satisfaction, suggesting that individuals lower their expectations when they observe suffering of their peers (Eggers et al., 2006). Future expectations emerge as more important predictors of subjective economic well-being in Russians than do past material well-being levels, especially in low-income groups (Khashchenko, 2012a, 2012b). These findings suggest that Russians have a range of coping strategies to adapt to economic troubles. Other social factors that are associated with well-being globally and may explain the relatively low levels of well-being in Russia include social support, generosity, freedom to choose, perception of corruption (Helliwell et al., 2010, 2016).

Early SWB studies attempted to explain Russian well-being mainly by socioeconomic variables, typically coming to the conclusion that Russians are not less happy than people in other countries, given their economic situation (e.g., Veenhoven, 2001). However, some recent empirical findings suggest that Russians may be particularly gloomy, after all, and that at least some of the paradoxes and discrepancies between the findings of studies using different proxies for well-being (happiness, affect balance, life satisfaction) can be explained by the unique characteristics of the Russian cultural context.

Across different studies, Russian respondents appear to share some characteristics with both Western and Eastern cultures; Russia is neither individualist, nor collectivist (Naumov & Puffer, 2000). Russians tend to define happiness in terms of luck and fortune (Oishi, 2010). Compared to countries like New Zealand and Brazil, Russians show a higher fear of happiness (Joshanloo et al., 2014). They believe that it is less attainable, less controllable, and more fragile than do Americans (Lyubomirsky, 2000). Compared to Americans, Russians believe that fate or chance has more control over their goals, and are more pessimistic in evaluating their perceived chances of goal attainment (Savina, 2013). There is a strong focus on security and power values (Magun & Rudnev, 2010) and a high uncertainty avoidance (Naumov & Puffer, 2000), suggesting that Russians may focus on avoiding possible future troubles more than on achieving goals. Pursuing goals with an avoidant mindset was not negatively associated with life satisfaction in Russians, unlike Americans (Elliot et al., 2001), indicating in Russia trying to avoid trouble may be a more adaptive strategy. Such a focus on the potential future negative events and their avoidance should entail negative emotions.

Some empirical evidence shows important differences in emotional processing between Russia and other countries. Compared to Americans and the British,

Russians demonstrate higher levels of emotional complexity, suggesting that they are more likely to experience a wider range of both positive and negative emotions, which are also more likely to come in combination, although these tendencies are even stronger in East Asians (Grossmann et al., 2016). Two studies by Grossmann et al. (2012) indicated that Russian students, compared to Americans, spent more time looking at negative than at positive pictures and that identification with Russian culture in bicultural students from Latvia facilitated recognition of negative words. Grossmann and Kross (2010) found that in Russians, compared to Americans, self-reflection was associated with fewer depressive symptoms, and reflecting on a negative affect entailed less distress and more adaptive construals. They also found that Russians were more likely to self-distance from their emotions, which could explain the different effects of self-reflection in these two cultures. These findings suggest that Russians may indeed have a higher tendency to brood, compared to Americans, but brooding and rumination are not as detrimental for the Russians' well-being.

Another potential explanation for the “gloomy Russians” hypothesis are cultural differences in emotional expression rules. In a 1993 study, American students described stereotypical Russians as cold and restrained (Stephan et al., 1993). Many Russian and foreign authors have noted the notorious reluctance of Russians to smile. Sternin (2000) argued that a smile for Russians is meant to be very sincere and must have a very concrete and logical reason (“Laughter with no reason is a sign of stupidity,” as a Russian saying goes); any ambiguity about why someone smiles could lead to confusion and worry in others. According to Gasparyan (2011), when the causes of smiling or laughter are unclear, Russians typically err on the negative or cynical side when guessing the reasons, whereas Americans tend to assume that a smiling or laughing person is just happy or having a good time. Based on her content analysis of *Anna Karenina*, Lev Tolstoy's famous novel, Stefanenko (2014) suggests that tendency to inhibit smiling emerged in the twentieth century. When asked about indicators of a happy person, Russians students rate activity and vigor higher than smiling (Kachur, 2014). In a recent study (Krys et al., 2016) Russia emerged as one of the few countries where a smiling person was rated as less intelligent than a non-smiling one; Russians also tended to rate a smiling person as less honest.

Do Russians control their emotional expression, and if yes, do they control negative emotions as well as positive ones? Historical accounts from 1940s and 1950s described Russians as emotionally expressive and alive (see Wierzbicka, 1998). Wierzbicka's linguistic analysis indicates a wide repertoire of emotional expressivity terms existing in the Russian language, but positive connotations for both metaphors of emotional expressivity and emotional control (Ibid.). Kitayama and Markus (1994) believe that Russians are high in emotional expressivity. A review by Jurcik et al. (2013) suggests that Russians are have a rich emotional life and are less inhibited with respect to reporting and expressing negative emotions than are Americans. However, Mondry and Taylor (1998) suggest that newer generations of Russians may place higher value on emotional control.

Empirical studies of emotional expression and emotional control produce a mixed picture. A study in American older adults found that Eastern Slavs were more likely

to report and express negative emotions, compared to other cultural groups (Consedine & Magai, 2002). In a comparative study of 33 countries by Matsumoto et al. (2008) using student samples Russia emerged as one of the least emotionally expressive nations. In another study, where participants were asked to select which of six display categories people “should” do in various situations and categories: express, de-amplify, amplify, mask, qualify, or control (Matsumoto et al., 1998), Russians selected the “emotional control” category more frequently than did Asians or Americans. However, this effect was moderated by social context, suggesting that Russians exercise less control over their negative emotional expression with strangers, but more control with people they know, compared to both Americans and Asians. A later study specifically found that Russians control the expression of several positive and negative emotions (surprise, fear, disgust, happiness) more than do Americans and Japanese (Matsumoto et al., 2005).

Three recent studies by Sheldon and colleagues (2017b) focused on comparing inhibition of happiness and unhappiness in USA and Russian student samples. Although Russians and Americans did not differ on subjective well-being (SWB), a consistent pattern was found, showing that Russians, compared to Americans, reported greater inhibition of the expression of happiness, but not of unhappiness, and this effect was mainly confined to stranger setting and was quite weak in the friends/family setting. The degree of happiness inhibition with strangers was negatively correlated with SWB in the U.S. samples but was unrelated to SWB in the Russian samples, suggesting that expression of happiness plays a less adaptive role in Russia. These findings suggest that Russians may not be less happy than Americans, but they tend to inhibit their expression of happiness, particularly to strangers, which is similar to findings from collectivist cultures. A recent comparative study of emotion control values in Russia and in more collectivist and traditionalist Azerbaijan (Pankratova & Osin, 2015) found that Russians ascribed less value to emotional control, but reported higher self-efficacy with respect to controlling their own emotions.

Are Russians happy or unhappy? According to World Happiness Report (Helliwell et al., 2016), on average Russians fare relatively well, although their level of happiness is still relatively low (rank 56 out of 157), compared to most developed Western countries. The level of happiness equality is also quite low (rank 81 out of 157); large within-country differences may partly explain the inconsistent findings in SWB from studies using non-representative Russian samples. Socioeconomic data suggest that Russians have a range of valid reasons to be less satisfied with their lives, compared to people in other developed Western countries. The differences in affect balance may be explained by cultural features and emotional expression norms: compared to most other Westerners, Russians have a rich emotional life, pay more attention to negative emotions, and are less inhibited about expressing them. However, the levels of emotional control are also high, particularly with respect to positive emotions and in social settings. This explains why Russians are often described as reserved and even hostile with strangers, but very warm and friendly with their friends.

The Growth of Positive Psychology in Russia in the Twenty-First Century

Information on the positive psychology movement started to penetrate the Russian psychological community in 2002. The first author of this chapter, who was at that time a Professor in the Psychology Department at Lomonosov Moscow State University, was invited as a speaker to the First Positive Psychology Summit in Washington D.C. in 2002. Since then, the dissemination of positive psychology in Russia has been and still is mostly associated with him and his research team, though it would not be correct to label him as a positive psychologist. Positive psychology refers mostly to an agenda, rather than a single theoretical approach; specific approaches within this field can vary widely, from straightforward positivist ones, devoid of any philosophical presumptions, to evolutionary and even existentialist ones, based on the ideas of self-determination, self-organization, agency, and meaning. Positive psychology, like the most of Russian psychology, is leaning to the latter pole, paying due to the complexity of higher forms of human conduct.

D. Leontiev's professional socialization was influenced by Lev Vygotsky's and Alexey Leontiev's Cultural-Historical Activity Theory Approach (CHAT) (see Leontiev, 2020). Among the key themes of this approach were the development of higher forms of human mediated self-regulation and personal meaning as a component of consciousness, regulatory mechanism of human activity and the basic constituent of personality. Besides CHAT, D. Leontiev has been strongly influenced by existentialist thought, having in his young years established good personal contacts with Victor Frankl and James Bugental, and later with the new generation of leaders of existential psychology. The focus of his academic interests was the issue of personal meaning; both his Ph.D. thesis (1988) and Dr.Sc. thesis (1999) were devoted to a comprehensive theory of personal meaning. Besides, his interests in 1980s–1990s included psychology of art and empirical aesthetics, personality assessment, and psychology of advertising.

Since 2005, D. Leontiev has been giving introductory courses on Positive Psychology for graduate psychology students at Moscow State University and at some distant Russian universities. Despite the recognition of cultural differences between the US and Russia, Positive Psychology was met with a strong interest. At the same time he initiated research work in some relevant fields, having created an informal research group focusing on the issues of self-determination and personality potential at the department of Psychology of Lomonosov Moscow State University, where five Ph.D. theses on these topics were defended between 2004 and 2007. The group also developed Russian versions of a number of popular assessment tools, including Satisfaction with Life Scale (Diener et al., 1985), Subjective Happiness Scale (Lyubomirsky & Lepper, 1999), VIA inventory of strengths (Peterson & Seligman, 2004), General Causality Orientations Scale (Deci & Ryan, 1985), Hardiness Personal Views Survey (Maddi & Khoshaba, 2001), Attributional Style Questionnaire (Peterson et al., 1982), Life Orientation Test (Scheier & Carver, 1985) and others. Some tools have been adapted by other scholars,

e.g. Psychological Well-being Scales (Ryff, 1989) by Tatyana Shevelenkova and Pavel Fesenko (Russian State University for Humanities).

During this pre-institutional period (that is, in 2006–2011 there were no formal research units focused on positive psychology issues) the work of the group followed several research directions:

1. Positive personality development during adolescence. The concept of positive personality development (Leontiev, 2006) refers both to the direction of developmental processes and to their qualitative properties, using the degree of approaching and applying specifically human capacities and potentialities (rather than subhuman ones) as an objective criterion of development, progressive emancipation from symbiotic ties as its general direction, and personal autonomy as its goal. The relevant research focus was on the development of freedom and responsibility as the bases of self-determination during the transition from childhood to adulthood (Kaliteevskaya & Leontiev, 2004; Kaliteevskaya et al., 2006). Several patterns of developed or underdeveloped self-determination mechanisms were detected in varied samples of adolescents and young adults, reflecting the success or failure of transition from being determined to being self-determined that underlies personality maturity.
2. Buffering role of positive personality resources in challenging conditions. Since 2009 a special research group has been working with physically challenged adolescents and youth in inclusive high school and university settings, aiming to reveal compensatory mechanisms and buffering patterns that serve as psychological resources for overcoming the challenge of disability (Lebedeva, 2012; Leontiev et al., 2017). Physical disability leads to a “radical reorganization of all personality that brings new mental forces to life and directs them” (Vygotsky, 1983, p. 563). It does not limit developmental opportunities, but rather requires extra effort and resources compared to the situation of regular development. We found that personality resources contribute more to pathways of personality development in physically challenged students than in “conditionally healthy” ones. A model of the pathways of personality development in challenging conditions, as distinct from both normal and abnormal development, was proposed (Leontiev, 2014).
3. Choicework. Choice is treated as a form of internal work (activity). A number of studies have shown that both the process of choice and its outcome strongly depend on the way this inner work is organized (or skipped completely in cases of spontaneous choice). In order to reveal it, new research techniques of Argumentation Analysis and Subjective Quality of Choice (Leontiev et al., 2020) were developed. The studies showed that preference for highly uncertain settings over fairly predictable ones is characteristic of individuals with high autonomy, optimism, hardiness, life meaning, and self-efficacy (Mandrikova, 2006); that positive traits predict a more elaborate and mindful structure of choice (agentic choice), which, in turn, predicts higher satisfaction with choice (Fam & Leontiev, 2013); that “everyday” and “fateful” choices are carried out in different ways and have different predictors, with a stronger contribution of personality variables for

- “everyday” choices than for “fateful” ones (Fam, 2015; Fam, et al., 2017). The findings of these studies are summarized in a monograph (Leontiev et al., 2015).
4. Personal meaning theory. This theory (Leontiev, 1999, 2007, 2013) further develops the activity theory approach (Leontiev, 1978) and relational views on meaning (Baumeister, 1991; Nuttin, 1984). Meaning is viewed not as a special object of analysis, but rather as a network of ties that link an object in question to meaningful contexts. To understand the meaning of A, we are to transcend the A and to investigate whether and in what ways A is connected to the person’s motivation, attitudes, and worldview at large. To use an IT metaphor, meaning is analogous to a hyperlink, and like a hyperlink it cannot exist as an isolated phenomenon, but rather as a part of a comprehensive network. Meaningfulness, that is, being meaningfully connected with what is important for the person, is one of the three orthogonal criteria of what is good; the other two are positive affective balance and deliberate controllability (Leontiev, 2016).
 5. Self-regulation and personality potential. Self-regulation refers to the basic principle of goal-directed activity of a living organism that accounts for moving from worse outcomes to better ones, based on the corrections of activity, according to the perceived discrepancies between the desired and the actual state of affairs (see Leontiev, 2012). Personality potential refers to the type of personality organization that is capable of effective autoregulation in various life domains. A series of studies were carried out, aimed at revealing the structure of personality potential and exploring its role in self-determination, goal attainment, and coping with difficulties (Leontiev, 2011, 2016). In a series of studies of chemistry students at Moscow State University, some personality potential variables were shown to predict academic success together with achievement and motivation variables (Gordeeva et al., 2011).

Although there were no other dedicated research units or programs at this period, there were both theoretical and empirical publications relevant to the positive psychology agenda, including works focused on the problems of happiness in Russian culture and society by Inna Dzhidaryan (Institute of Psychology, Russian Academy of Sciences, Moscow), subjective well-being by Rail Shamionov (Saratov State University), optimism/pessimism and hope by Sergei Enikolopov (Mental Health Research Center, Russian Academy of Medical Sciences, Moscow) and Kuanyshbek Muzdybayev (Sociological Institute, Russian Academy of Sciences, St. Petersburg), wisdom by K. Muzdybayev and Lyudmila Antsyferova (Institute of Psychology, Russian Academy of Sciences, Moscow), and others. However, most of these publications did not place any special emphasis on positive psychology at large.

Positive Psychology Laboratory at HSE University

A new period began when D. Leontiev and several members of his group organized a small Laboratory of Personality Development of Physically Challenged Students at the Moscow State University for Psychology and Education (2009–2012), as well as a larger laboratory of Positive Psychology and Quality of Life Studies at the National Research University Higher School of Economics, presently HSE University (2011). This allowed more sustainable and coherent research projects to be developed.

A milestone event in the history of positive psychology in Russia was the sixth European Conference on Positive Psychology (Moscow, June 2012), organized by the staff of the Laboratory of Positive Psychology and Quality of Life Studies with D. Leontiev as the Chair. Both the HSE University and Lomonosov Moscow State University were involved. Over 400 participants from all over the world took part in the conference. The keynote speakers were Mihalyi Csikszentmihalyi, Richard Ryan, Carol Ryff (USA), Dmitry Leontiev (Russia), Michael Eid (Germany), Ranghild Nes (Norway), Shalom Schwartz (Israel), Robert Vallerand (Canada), and Leo Bormans (Belgium).

In 2014 the group working within the HSE received government funding from the university, and the Laboratory of Positive Psychology and Quality of Life Studies was upgraded to the International Laboratory of Positive Psychology of Personality and Motivation (headed by Dmitry Leontiev with academic supervisor Ken Sheldon). Now the staff of the lab includes about 20 scholars, including doctoral and Master's students, and about 10 informal team members. Among the leading researchers of the lab are Tamara Gordeeva, Ph.D., Evgeny Osin, Ph.D., Elena Rasskazova, Ph.D., Elena Ovchinnikova, Ph.D., Anna Lebedeva, Ph.D., Anna Fam, Ph.D., Vasily Kostenko, Ph.D., Alena Zolotareva, Ph.D., and Martin Lynch, Ph.D.

The main line of research carried out in the Laboratory refers to relationships between motivation, goal setting, meanings, personality resources, and well-being indicators.

Basing on the lab staff resources, in 2020 Master's program in Positive Psychology has been launched at HSE university (Program director V. Kostenko, Academic supervisor D. Leontiev).

Development of a Novel Positive Psychology Theory

This theoretical work is rooted in Cultural-Historical Activity Theory Approach, on the one hand, and Self-Determination Theory and Flow Theory, on the other hand. We claim to bridge these approaches, developing theoretical models that would integrate the existing findings.

1. A 3D eudaimonia model (Leontiev, 2016) distinguishes three criteria of the desirable: positive affective balance, effortful deliberate control over activity

processes and outcomes, and meaningfulness as connectedness with comprehensive contexts and distant perspectives. From an evolutionary perspective, it would be highly advantageous for any living species to find rewarding those experiences that would provide momentary pleasure in an activity that requires effort, and has long-term positive consequences. In different activities these three criteria may converge or diverge; their frequent convergence (covariation) makes their differentiation a methodological problem. A combinatorial model of experiences (Leontiev, 2015a) distinguishes pleasure, meaning, and effort as primary elements of every experience irreducible to each other that can be present in all possible combinations: the absence of all three produces the experience of void, the presence of all three the experience of engagement and their pairwise combinations the experiences of commitment, enjoyment, and flow. All of them are phenomenologically distinguishable and measurable (Osin & Leontiev, 2017; Leontiev et al., 2018; Klein et al., 2019). This model gives a more detailed explanation of the flow experience and develops flow theory (Csikszentmihalyi, 1990).

2. Autocommunication theory provides an explanation of positive personality development through the mechanisms of self-reflection and positive solitude. It is methodologically based on the differential model of self-reflection (Leontiev & Salikhova, 2010; Leontiev & Osin, 2014); and multidimensional model of loneliness experiences (Osin & Leontiev, 2013; Leontiev, 2019); both models are implemented in original assessment instruments (see below). Positive forms of self-reflection are both theoretically and empirically distinct from negative ones. It has been shown that their actual differentiation begins at a definite personality development stage, when positive forms of self-reflection become predictive of personality development stage, unlike negative ones (Kostenko, 2017; Kostenko & Leontiev, 2018). Positive forms of loneliness experience are also distinguished from negative ones. Their connection with personality development stage and positive self-reflection is established. The key explanatory construct of the theory is autocommunication, or communication with oneself; positive self-reflection is viewed as a condensed and reduced form of this autocommunication, and solitude as a supporting condition. This is why individuals at higher stages of development with strong positive self-reflection skills value solitude, unlike the majority who are unable to make use of it due to lack of positive self-reflection skills.

Generation of Novel Positive Psychology Research

A number of large-scale studies have been made through 2014–2016 on the basis of samples from Tomsk State University, Omsk State University, Altay State Pedagogical Academy, Higher School of Economics, and University of Missouri (USA) for cross-cultural comparisons.

A study by Rasskazova et al. (2016) studied the effects of high-level and low-level need satisfaction on well-being. According to Maslow's (1943) theory

of needs, people do not become sensitized to “higher” level needs until they have satisfied their “lower” level needs, but, according to the Self-determination theory (SDT) model, meeting high-level psychological needs is non-contingently beneficial. In two large-scale studies using samples of employees from Russian energy companies, they measured low-level need-satisfaction (felt security and felt financial satisfaction) and high-level need satisfaction (of basic needs for autonomy, competence, and relatedness). In both studies, both the lower level and higher level need-satisfaction sets had strong main effects upon many positive work outcomes, including intrinsic motivation, organizational commitment, and SWB. However, in one of the studies Maslow’s “prepared to benefit” hypothesis was supported, in that satisfaction of high-level needs had slightly larger effects on outcomes when combined with satisfaction of low-level needs.

Another project inspired by existential theorizing focused on empirical integration of the concepts of freedom and responsibility. In three large-N cross-cultural studies Sheldon and colleagues (2018) tested the premise that psychological freedom (aka autonomy) and personal responsibility are complementary, rather than conflicting, and the further premise that freedom causes responsibility, rather than vice versa. In all studies, (a) supporting autonomy in an experimental context increased responsibility-taking after failure, whereas emphasizing responsibility did not; (b) measures of dispositional autonomy and dispositional responsibility were positively correlated; (c) and responsibility-taking was lower in Russia, a country typically ranked lower in world freedom indices. The last study also found that Russians were only inclined to take more responsibility than Americans when it was requested by family or friends, but not demanded by authorities or by strangers.

Attention has also been paid to validation of the relative autonomy continuum (described in Self-Determination Theory), whose psychometric structure and validity has recently been questioned. Sheldon and colleagues (2017a) derived a comprehensive relative autonomy index containing six subscales and 24 items, by conducting a paired paraphrase content analysis of existing measures operationalizing the continuum. The measure was administered to multiple U.S. and Russian samples, assessing motivation to attend class, study a major, and take responsibility. A range of analyses, including item-level and scale-level multi-dimensional scaling, confirmatory factor analyses, and simplex/circumplex modeling re-affirmed the psychometric validity of the relative autonomy continuum in multiple independent samples from two countries using different situations. Validation analyses using subjective well-being and trait autonomy as criteria showed that an aggregate relative autonomy index provides an unbiased and efficient indicator of the overall quality of motivation.

In a clinical context, Rasskazova (2012) conducted a study exploring the hypothesis that subjective appraisals of quality of life, satisfaction, and happiness result from a decision-making process and may be based on different subjective criteria in different people, especially in patients with mental disorders. Using the Quality of Life and Enjoyment Questionnaire (version for mental illnesses, Ritsner et al., 2005) and Lyubomirsky’s General Happiness Scale, Rasskazova (2012) compared the contribution of the quality of life in different domains to the general appraisal of

life satisfaction and subjective happiness in the three groups of young men (17–28 years old): non-psychotic depressive patients ($n = 76$), patients developing remission after the first psychotic episode ($n = 90$) and respondents without mental illness ($n = 185$). Although all domains are in different degrees important for the general appraisal of satisfaction and happiness, emotional sphere and functioning during the day are more important to the lives of those with non-psychotic depression compared with the two other groups (Rasskazova et al., 2017). Patients in remission after a psychotic episode were less oriented to the emotional and social domains, as well as financial well-being, than participants from the other two groups. Thus psychological analysis of patients should take into account not only the level of the quality of life, but also the criteria for its appraisal.

A series of studies by Gordeeva and colleagues investigated the predictors of academic achievement in university students. Attributional style research has focused mainly on how people explain negative events, such as rejection or failure, and mainly as a predictor of negative outcomes, like depression or anxiety. Optimistic attributional style for positive events, in relation to positive outcomes like well-being and academic achievement, has received comparatively little attention. Recently, Gordeeva and her colleagues (Gordeeva & Osin, 2010; Gordeeva, et al., 2020) conducted a series of three studies (including longitudinal ones) of optimistic attributional style, measured both for positive events (making global/stable attributions for positive events) and negative events (making specific/unstable attributions for negative events). They found that across the samples of early adolescents ($N = 182$), high-schoolers ($N = 202$), and college students ($N = 151$), separate factors for optimistic attributional styles for positive and negative events emerged in the data, factors independently predicting student well-being. However, only optimistic attributional style for positive events reliably predicted the students' academic achievement in cross-sectional and longitudinal perspective. Although most prior research has focused on attributional style for negative events because of clinical psychology's traditional interest in helping people cope with problems, it appears that explanations of positive events are just as important, not only for limiting depression and negative well-being, but also for promoting positive affect and positive well-being. The finding that both styles matter means that the "best" type of attributional style to have, from a well-being perspective, is a compound one in which one is able to both minimize the psychological ramifications of bad outcomes, and maximize the ramifications of good outcomes.

Another avenue of studies in the International Laboratory is related to human motivation and, in particular, different types of intrinsic motivation. Three types of intrinsic motivation were differentiated, learning motivation, competence motivation, and growth motivation, which are important predictors of positive outcomes, such as academic achievement and well-being of schoolchildren and college students. Recently, a phenomenon of interplay of intrinsic and self-respect motivation was found by Gordeeva and colleagues (Gordeeva et al., 2016). It was shown that gifted children had strong and dominant intrinsic motivation which stimulated their persistence and academic achievement, whereas regular students also needed self-esteem motivation and introjected motivation in order to be persistent and successful

at school. Overall, these findings help to understand the role of self-esteem motivation that can partly compensate the lack of flow and interest experiences and stimulate effort and persistence, which are important for achievement in different domains. These findings develop the idea of the continuum of motivation proposed in Self-Determination Theory (Deci & Ryan, 2000).

Empirical studies of the effects of quality of motivation on goal achievement (Suchkov, 2017) show that the extent of goal autonomy, or self-determined motivation behind the goal, is an important goal characteristic. The correspondence of a goal to the implicit motive reflecting the need for autonomy predicts the strength of the intention to achieve this goal, which, in turn, predicts the actual effort spent achieving the goal at later time. Higher effort invested is associated with higher progress, which predicts an increase in well-being in a longitudinal perspective.

There were also a number of research projects developed by other Russian scholars with relevance for Positive Psychology, but often without a direct reference to it.

Valery Khashenko (Institute of Psychology of Russian Academy of Sciences) focuses his studies on the field of subjective economic well-being (EWB). He has created a theory of EWB and an inventory for its assessment, with a five-dimensional structure, which includes economic optimism/pessimism, economic anxiety, subjective income adequacy, financial deprivation, and current wealth. He investigated various predictors of EWB, including lay theories of EWB, subjective scales of EWB, economic identity, constructs and types of economic values (Khashchenko, 2012a, 2012b).

Sofya K. Nartova-Bochaver (currently at the HSE University) is known for her studies of psychological sovereignty as a phenomenon of one's self-positioning at the frontiers of one's psychological space. The concept of psychological sovereignty bridges environmental psychology with personality psychology, phenomena of psychological privacy and psychological space with the phenomena of authenticity and autonomy (Nartova-Bochaver, 2008, 2017). Her recent studies are dedicated to home environment, emotional evaluation of home and home attachment as resources of well-being and predictors of mental health and emotional resilience in adults. The authors use the concept of friendliness of environment as its relevance for the person's need satisfaction and to classify the types of environment along with this dimension (Nartova-Bochaver et al., 2015, 2016). She is also involved (as well as Evgeny Osin) in cross-cultural studies of well-being (Żemojtel-Piotrowska et al., 2017).

Construction of Novel Positive Psychology Assessment Tools and Positive Psychology Interventions

The members of the laboratory keep working on Russian-language validation of assessment tools relevant to Positive Psychology tasks, as well as developing their modifications and original instruments. In particular, in addition to the tools listed

above, recently validated instruments include Quality of Life Enjoyment and Satisfaction Questionnaire (Endicott et al., 1993), PANAS (Watson et al., 1988), COPE (Carver et al., 1989), MAAS (Brown & Ryan, 2003), Subjective vitality scales (Ryan & Frederick, 1997), Scale of Inner Dialogue (Oleś, 2009). A large body of work is being done on the validation of Russian version of Washington University Sentence Completion Test (Hy & Loevinger, 1996).

The original inventories developed by the group include the Differential Self-Reflection Inventory (DSRI: Leontiev & Osin, 2014), Differential Test of Aloneness (DTA: Osin & Leontiev, 2013), Flow in Professional Activity (FPA: Leontiev, 2015a), Experiences in Activity (Leontiev, 2015b), Decision Making about Treatment (DMT: Tkhostov & Rasskazova, 2013), and the Subjective Quality of Choice (SQC: Leontiev et al., 2020). Alena Zolotareva created an original Differential Perfectionism Inventory (Zolotareva, 2012, 2013) based on the distinction of two forms of perfectionism, positive (normal) and negative (maladaptive). Some other relevant instruments mentioned earlier include the Economic Well-Being Inventory (Khashchenko, 2012b), Sovereignty of Psychological Space Inventory (Nartova-Bochaver, 2008, 2017), and the Functionality of Home Environment Inventory (Nartova-Bochaver et al., 2015). This list of available tools cannot be comprehensive, as there is no standard way of telling positive psychology assessment tools from others, and the work on many other new measures is ongoing. The same is true for positive psychology interventions. To date, we cannot refer to any publications presenting positive psychology interventions with rigorously measured effects, but work in this direction is ongoing at the International Laboratory of Positive Psychology of Personality and Motivation. In particular, we are working on choicework training (Dmitry Leontiev & Anna Fam) and the forms of facilitation of inner dialogue (Dmitry Leontiev & Vasily Kostenko).

Future of Positive Psychology in Russia

Apparently, due to the ambivalent attitude toward pursuit of happiness in the Russian culture (as described above), the ideas of positive psychology have been met by Russian academic community with some suspicion. Positive psychology could not escape the confusion with “positive thinking”, a glamour ideology of wearing rose-colored glasses at the expense of facing real life. A number of prominent Russian psychologists have criticized positive psychology on philosophical, ethical, or religious grounds based on this misunderstanding. However, with time an understanding of the true message and potential of positive psychology has been spreading in the Russian academic community. The number of scholars who find important resources for research and applied work in positive psychology is growing very fast, though the development of Positive Psychology training programs and curricula is still at its earliest stage.

The general Russian public, on the contrary, has welcomed the ideas of positive psychology with great enthusiasm, and they are visible in the activity of mass media.

A highly popular Russian version of *Psychologies* magazine systematically covers positive psychology topics, publishes interviews with positive psychology leaders, and sponsors thematic events. Many other magazines and electronic media, ranging from mainstream (“*Mayak*”) to highbrow ones (“*Svoboda*”), have also covered positive psychology topics. A number of relevant books are available in Russian translation (*Psychology of Happiness* by Michael Argyle, *Happiness* by Richard Layard, *Psychology of Ultimate Concerns* by Robert Emmons, *Learned Optimism*, *Authentic Happiness* and *Flourish!* by Martin Seligman, *The Paradox of Choice* by Barry Schwartz, *Positive Psychology in a Nutshell* by Ilona Boniwell, *Flow*, *Creativity*, *Evolving Self* and *Finding Flow* by Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi, etc.). We have been seeing an increasing demand for positive psychology in business, business education, business consulting and coaching, especially in the last two years. Business forums, Executive MBI programs and magazines like *Harvard Business Review* (Russian edition) are highly interested in positive psychology issues, especially motivation, engagement, flow and emotional intelligence.

A special feature of the Russian attitude toward life, deeply rooted in Russian culture and history, is a relatively low value ascribed to human life, both of one’s own and of others. Only 150 years have elapsed since the end of slavery in Russia and only 70 since the end of the disastrous World War II, where the country lost tens of millions of its citizens; not to mention those lost in the fire of the revolutions of 1917, the Russian Civil War and in the Gulag. No wonder that for many decades since the end of WWII the only aspiration of the masses has been “let there be anything but war.” In addition to this, the totalitarian Soviet and authoritarian Post-Soviet regimes have been producing and reproducing learned helplessness, or the lack of people’s capacity to control their lives. Probably it is the low value of life—finding life hardly worth living—that underlies critically low life expectancy (especially in men), and extremely high rates of suicide, lethal incidents, alcoholism, drug abuse, violent crime, abortions, and other phenomena indicative of social ill-being. This witnesses to the potential of positive psychology for Russia: the movement can serve as an antidote to these negative trends, to improve the situation by helping people to value their life and to find ways to make it worth living.

This low value of life is at the same time an obstacle to a more positive way of living and a challenge for it. There are no easy or short-cut ways to attain this goal. The mission of positive psychology is to reveal to people the diverse opportunities for a better, more pleasant, meaningful, and self-determined life, which can serve as a goal for investing one’s efforts and personality resources. Our International Laboratory of Positive Psychology of Personality and Motivation sees its general mission in increasing the value and attractiveness of life for the Russian people by helping them to find ways to shape it actively. Our goals for the next few years are focused on the development of positive psychology training programs of a different scale and on disseminating positive views of human motivation based on Self-Determination Theory. This is closely related to the future perspectives of positive psychology in Russia. We believe that the future to be planned and created is the only future we can meaningfully talk about.

Resource Page for Readers

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Acknowledgements The preparation of this chapter was supported by the HSE University Basic Research Program.

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