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KIDS, STREETS, AND ACTIVITIES

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KIDS, STREETS, AND ACTIVITIES

Street activities are recognized as playing significant role in children and teenage socialization. However, the socialization mechanism of street activities is gradually changing. Active play and street gangs remain in past, as most parents today acknowledge.

The present article investigates the forms of street leisure activities of Russian kids and teenagers born in different decades of late XX and early XXI centuries. The research is based on the answers of 251 participants to the two developed thematic questionnaires. Content-analysis of the answers allows to identify five principal categories of street leisure activities, namely: games, communication, exploratory activities, risk behaviors, and cultural activities. The article describes the main components of each of the categories and analyses their representation in both adult and teenage samples' leisure time. The results allow to manifest the relation between children's leisure activities dynamics and their social environment, as regards increased social insecurity and uncertainty, urbanization rates, overpopulation, etc. The research also investigates the areas of street leisure activities, level of parental control, as well as types of rules and regulations set by parents regarding their children's travel and leisure. The future research suggestions given the results are made.

Keywords: childhood, adolescence, street leisure activity, leisure, street, urban environment

JEL Classification: Z

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Introduction

Children's street play has long caught attention of psychologists, anthropologists and other social scientists. Also it is interesting for arts professionals, for example, photographers. Some photographers collections boast invaluable samples of kids' street play like, for example, Colin O'Brian's⁴. Unregulated street play is crucial for kids' cognitive, physical, social and emotional development, it helps children develop skills to stand for themselves and cope with social life challenges (American Academy of Pediatrics, 2007) (fig. 1).

The research of children's street play in Russian psychology is not excessive. The report of the most full and elaborate study could be found in "Secret world of kids within the adult world" (Osorina, 2008). In other research, the scientists' attention is mainly caught by either physical environment of toddlers and preschoolers (toys) or by family or educational components of social environment. In the latter case the children's environment is understood as a "metaphor that highlights complex interaction between adults and children" (Nartova-Bochaver, 2012, p. 1).

In the psychological and pedagogical literature, the street environment term is often used to designate:

1. cultural component of social environment that is characterized by vast opportunities for development and entertainment (fairs, festivals, picnics, etc.);
2. source of risk which has to be prevented (drug and alcohol abuse, vandalism and other types of delinquent behavior).



Figure 1. Young boys playing in a New York City street, 1909.
https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Children%27s_street_culture#/media/File:Children_playing_in_street,_New_York.jpg

Apparently, the experience of spending time in uncontrolled environment with peers could not be limited to the above viewpoints. Such leisure is becoming literally unique experience for the children in modern society, something that school and family can not offer. In contrast, the children of late XX used to get such experience in

⁴ <http://spitalfieldslife.com/2012/04/12/colin-obriens-kids-on-the-street/>

the street spaces: house backyards, back streets, garage roofs, abandoned houses, to name a few. As regards younger kids, the common impression is that the online spaces have largely replaced such street leisure, and even though the kids are still engaged in similar risky activities, in modern situation the adults usually accompany the kids in the street.

The street activities played the big role in personal independence and self-efficacy development among the adolescents previously, and the role of these activities among the modern adolescents needs to be studied more intensively. Nevertheless, sociologists, anthropologists, and geographers, but not psychologists conduct the studies of children's street leisure predominantly. The present study across the disciplines of psychology and anthropology aims to expand the existing limited view on the role of children's street activities. Scrutinizing the number of narrations in which street environment is used by teens helps to clearing the details of the adolescents' everyday life on the outside territories and to enlightening its role in the socialization in general. The cross-generational comparison allows find out the specific of the street leisure among namely modern adolescents.

Renovating the knowledge about street leisure among the adolescents is the psychological issue of this work. It contributes into the representations of the adolescents' everyday routine, so the theoretical ideas towards adolescents become updated by the new results and perhaps partly developed taking into account the modern content of this age period. Also it helps to develop the research-based practical products (such as prevention programs or trainings) in light new findings of adolescents' life style and preferences.

Background

Street as a socialization environment

In international studies, children's independent mobility, or "everyday pedestrian practices" (Horton, 2014, after Middleton, 2010) and their correlation with gender and family socioeconomic status research is the domain of both psychology and transport geography. The other issues that such studies cover are the young people's mobility dependence on socio-historical norms (automobility, family practices or "stranger danger" (Horton, 2014).

The opportunities for such activities vary with regards to the child-friendliness characteristic of urban environment (James et al, 1998), which influences children's ability to "conquer" the surrounding spaces, for example, through naming the objects that comprise it (Hart, 1979). Children tend to involve natural objects in their play, such as snow, mud, sand (fig.2). The urban objects, such as paths and lanes, are often used for creation of children's "own" places, and adults interference is naturally met with discontent on the kids' side (Jenks, 2005).



Figure 2. Snow battle. <http://www.bbc.com/news>

In rural areas, children are often involved in household and farming routine, and the countryside offers them greater territories for exploration and more independency (Jenks, 2005) (pic. 3). Studies of 1990s highlight children's preferences of natural elements, such as trees, for games, which is less possible in urban environment. However, later research detects a shift to playgrounds and sport settings, as well as neighborhood yards and even public places, such as parks and retail centres, especially for the lower socioeconomic class families children (Castonguay, Jutras, 2009). Whichever the choice, children tend to use their favourite places for cognitive restoration and emotional regulation: coping with personal worries, feeling of protection and being in control, escape social pressures are something that a favourite place offers a child (Korpela et al, 2002). Having a "personal" place makes a child feel stronger, supports their self-efficacy and self-perception (Sobel, 1990). Furthermore, personal spaces give children a chance to hibernate, restore from everyday routine, and inspire feeling of well-being and peace. Natural landscapes are reported to be most suitable for kids in terms of recovering after life trials and tribulations and reflecting over the events that happen to them (Korpela et al, 2002).



Figure 3. Teenagers and their bicycles (1997). From the personal files of A.K.Nisskaya.

Young people's preferences are strongly linked to both their current surroundings and individual characteristics. For example, the boys who experience negative emotions during their stay at summer camp prefer desolate places and hide-outs and explore new spaces much more than happier boys, who tend to hit the paces more suitable for communication (Thurber, Malinowski, 1999). Bixler and Floyd noticed (1997) that children loath "wild places" that they believe to be related to something disgusting, or if they are afraid of wild animals, or for the fear of getting lost. The other factors influencing the choice of favourite places are: residency (including but not limited to urban\rural environment), physical and social restrictions (car traffic, tabus), gender and age (girls and younger children face more safety-reasoned restrictions).

In addition, the notion of favourite places differs across the research literature. For instance, Corbishley's study (1995) highlighted that 90% of poorest London district dwellers' children could not point out their favourite place. Clark and Uzzell (2002), however, approached the problem with the help of Gibson's notion of affordances, or "possibilities for action afforded to an observer by an object in the environment" (Clark&Uzzell, 2002, after Bruce&Green, 1993). Accordingly, the neighborhood, school and downtown affordances are largely shaped by social interaction opportunities they offer whereas home spaces enable retreat affordances to be realized - both in answering security seeking needs and enabling behaviors that involve close friends.

Modern urban environment does not offer kids much spacial freedom and independency: the factors that shape children's mobility involve physical borders, such as fences, car traffic, parents connections to the society on the one hand, and time restrictions on the other (request to return home by a certain hour, home routine that consumes free time, guest visits and transportation time). The games occur in environment that could be controlled by adults (e.g. before dark and within a mobile phone's reach) and tend to be replaced by more secure strolls with friends, which do not violate any of the above mentioned restrictions and can last for hours and significantly invest in friendship and mental well-being (Horton et al, 2014).

The main reason for parental restrictions is that adults often treat neighborhood as perilous and challenging environment, which they try to control (Prezza et al, 2005). Among the practices used by parents to cope with the street risks are setting rules, collaborative discussions of risks involving kids, employing so called neighborhood collective efficacy processes and practices, e.g. shared values, communications between teenagers and adults of different households, etc. (Coley, 2004).

The scientists recognize the trend reflecting the drop in the amount of children's street activity, and slump in mobility freedom and narrowing down urban consumption spaces are seen as the indicators of this decline (e.g Hillman et al, 1991, Pooley, 2005). If to look at historical background of this process, the starting point could be the 1920s, when cities street spaces offered natural objects for children's play, e.g pits, swamps, stones, woods, sheds. The designated areas for children's play start to emerge with the first strikes of urbanization in 1940s (Gaster, 1991). Karsten describes this process as a claim of children street spaces by adults, which is directly the opposite to what happens to homes. This process is most vivid in generation of 1950-60s kids, who would spend most their free time in the streets. This observation allows the author to distinguish between indoor and outdoor children and back seat generation.

As regards pre-Soviet Russian cities, it is public parks that children and teenagers would occupy under adult supervision. House yards, that nowadays are impartial of playgrounds, served for household needs. They did not become available for children until 1930s, when Soviet government stepped in the urban development and introduced vast house yards with slopes, sways and ice rinks in the city plans. The playgrounds were most intensively used in the post-War 1950s, when the adults became more engaged in work, and the new living standards implied several families sharing one single apartment ("kommunalki"), which left practically no space for children at home. Residents' attitude to the children yard games varied depending on the playground facilities, residents' mix, status of parents', age of children. Interestingly, the playgrounds of that time were not used solely by kids: teenagers would play the sports games along with the younger children, and adults would play domino, gossip, supervise the grandchildren and even dry the laundry on the racks situated in the very same yards (Piir, 2006).

Nowadays, the street, or rather "yard" children's activity is declining, with most kids enjoying the benefits of countryside ("dachas") vacations (Osorina, 2008). This observation is supported by the marketing research: supermarket chain "Perekrestok", that is engaged in outreach social work, reports visible dissipation of street gangs (Khlokov et al, 2014). The explanation of this pattern could be found in low rates of subjective security of cities residents. As Radina (2012) points out in this regard, "a city resident has to support his choice of the city he lives in, even though he fears it; dreads its wastelands and fears other people at the same time".

The research of children's mobility and urban spaces can not be limited to psychological studies. An important information could be obtained from, for example, geography studies. Thus, Yi-Fu Tuan's study in geography (2001) characterizes a person's development in terms of feelings towards space (associated with freedom) and place (associated with security and attachment) and the balance between them. This polarity is not discrete, but is rather represents a continuum, and both aspirations embody two different identities that co-exist in a person. According to the paradigm, one's self draws inspiration from the both sources, and "the more we rely on cosmos for our development, the more we desire the hearth" (Easthope, 2004, p.133).

The boundary between domicile and the outer world is vivid in folklore and fiction literature. As Osorina (2008) points out, even an elementary school student can learn about the various ways this boundary could be crossed from the moderate amount of tales most of kids usually know at this age. Expanding the concept of borders, Lotman (2016) suggests the notion of sub-spaces of different structure, borders between which are shown to be impermeable in most tales. To illustrate this principle, “woods” and “home” would be the two dimensions of the tale space, fantastic and human respectively, and a “river” could serve as a separating element. The clash between evil coming from the fantastic world and the human world happens exactly at such borders. Nevertheless, the characters from the “woods” world normally can not enter the “home” space because they are restricted by the rules of the fictional world, and that is why all scary and marvelous events happen in the “woods” domain.

In imaginative literature, the road separating home and the outdoor world is seen as a transformative experience for the main character. According to Bakhtin, the road chronotope in folklore is always a symbol of a character’s life path. For example, crossroads serve as an euphemism for a point of no return, and, similarly, decision to start a journey and consequent return home could be treated as stages of a person’s growing up. This deeply rooted symbolism is the reason why the road concept has been fully adopted and developed in belletristics. What is more, a road represents socially dense environment for the main hero, who can meet literally anyone on his way. Thus, in a sense, a road serves as a point where the time flow becomes evident through the road spatial characteristics (Bakhtin, 1986).

Could it be so that through small episodes of his life, a child gets the same self-enhancing experience as the tale characters do? Are his street adventures full of miraculous and fearsome encounters? The following empirical part of the study aims to find that out.

Methods and procedure

Empirical study implied online surveying sequentially of adults (1st stage) and adolescents (2nd stage).

On the 1st stage we used a specially developed survey “Spaces of childhood” when adults were asked to describe retrospectively their school time leisure street activities and to specify their demographic status (age, gender, residence), as well as start of independent mobility age. For the survey 121 adults were recruited (91 female, 30 male) 1936-1994 years of birth (fig. 4). The respondents’ cities of origin vary as regards their population numbers (from village to megalopolis) and location (they are located in the different regions of the former USSR). Such dispersion allows enough authentically reconstruct the forms of children’s leisure on this area relating to the middle of the XX century (fig. 5). The answers by the adult respondents were used then on the 2nd stage.

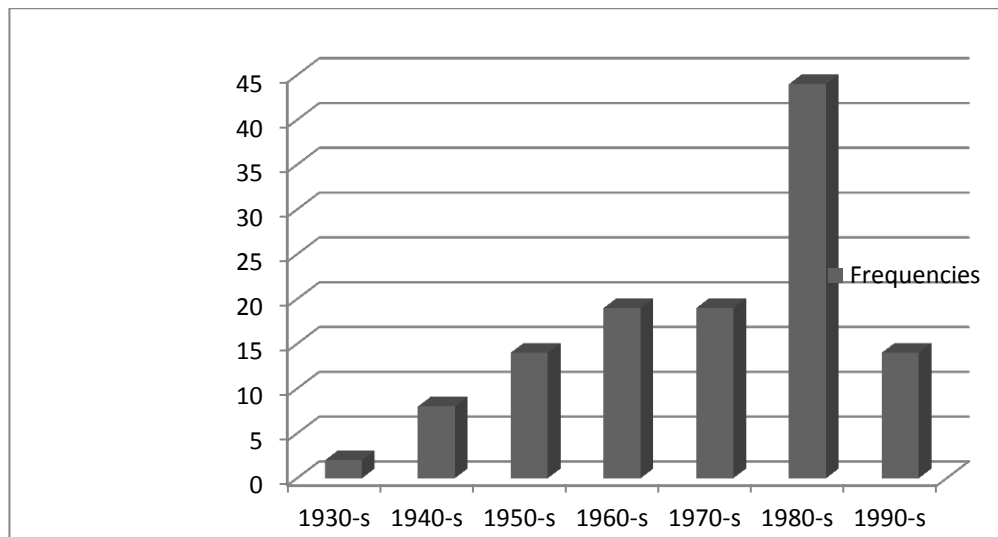


Figure 4. The decades of respondents' birth.

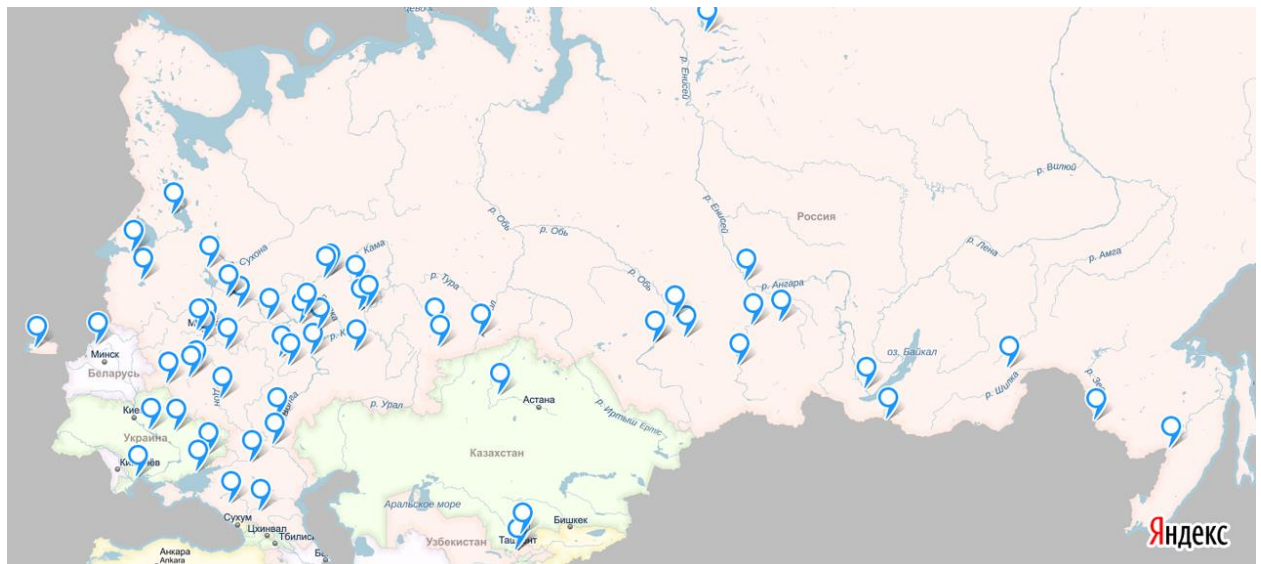


Figure 5. The 1st stage respondents' cities of origin.

On the 2nd stage the teenagers were offered the specially developed “Free time” survey. We kept in mind that adolescents tend to the compactness and avoiding the expanded narratives in the written word. That is why the survey started with 15 quotations from the adults' stories (1st stage) (e.g. “Our parents don't know usually where we are and they are not very interested in it: the main thing is that we should be back at home in the evening”). The respondents were asked to evaluate these quotations from the perspective of the similarity with their own life experience in points (from “1 – no similarity” – to “5 – very similar”). The goal of this part of survey was not so much exploring as more oriented on actualization adolescents' experience and improving their motivation to share their own stories and to compare them with the offered fragments. The next part of the survey included fragments (also from the 1st stage of the study) that illustrated 5 main forms of the street leisure appropriate to the adolescents from the previous generations (games, communication, exploratory activities, risk behaviors, and culture activities). In addition, it included one unusual form of exploratory activities that we supposed might be popular among the modern adolescents (walking alone).

The respondents were asked to read the fragments and to add them by their own stories that were similar with the described ones. Here is the example of the fragment: *“The house was a former gatehouse and stood in the forest. We knew that we should not visit it. There was great! But not for long. The doorsteps were broken, plus it was under lock and key. So we tied the ropes (which were then reeled on) and climbed through the broken second-floor window. The former tenants’ stuff was up to our waists. We were treating there for a week. Then the floor felled in one of the rooms. Lucky we – there were no injuries”*.

The questionnaire also included questions regarding respondents’ demographic characteristics and the question about the start of uncontrolled free time spending age.

The number of respondents on the 2nd stage reached 130 (94 female, 36 male), born between 1997 and 2005, most of whom live in the capital city of Moscow (68%).

The differences between discussed location of the respondents in the 1st group (all territory of the former USSR) and in the 2nd group (predominantly large Russian cities, no villages) of course impose limitations on the possibility to compare their answers. However, the trends of urbanization and of the reduction of the rural population in general and frequent descriptions of the country life (“dacha”) among the adolescents partly compensate this limitation.

The key research questions were:

- when is the start of children’s independent mobility?
- what are the types of children’s street leisure activities?
- how do the children’s leisure change across generations?

As we supposed the adults’ answers were much more detailed than adolescents’ ones. During the adult survey 117 stories were collected, which is estimated as around 136,000 characters (spaces between words considered), and the teenagers sample produced 252 short associative statements of about 36,000 characters in total.

The respondents’ answers were processed using content analysis. The pilot study revealed unambiguous categorization of the answers by the experts, and it was decided to use only one person’s expertise for the main array of answers. The nodes were summarized to the general coding table. It included the following categories: activity (35 nodes, e.g. Socio-dramatic play or Disruptive behavior); mobility areas (e.g. Park, public garden); company; restrictions, and parental control. The categories were derived from all the meaningful data, even though some questions were left unanswered by some respondents. This is the source of possible mismatch between the number of respondents in the raw data tables. We got one common table with coded answers from two groups, 1634 units in total.

Results

At what age do children start to be independently mobile?

The minimal and maximal age that adult and teenage respondents indicated, as well as mean age, are summarized in fig. 6. The trend reflects gradual increase of children’s independent mobility starting age with time. Respectively, those born in 1930-1940s indicate the start of spending time in the streets alone as early as being preschoolers, whereas for the children of 1950s this age shifts to approximately 7 years, which coincides with the start of school. Start of school activity could be described in terms of “initiation” of the first-graders, after which children obtain new rights (to be alone in the streets) and new duties (studying). The trend goes down for those born in 1970s, which could be explained by parents perception of urban

environment as less hazardous (these are the first kids born by parents who have not experienced the War). However, for those born in 1980s the independent mobility starting age goes up to 8 years, which means the children are accompanied by adults on their way to school during first two years of studying. This process coincides with introduction of pre-school education and lowering the school entrance age to 6 years, which could be the reason for children's cognitive development to outrun their social skills and independence. Further upsurge of independent mobility start age to 10 years in 1990s reflects the increased social tension and pressures of the Soviet Union collapse. Apparently, now parents consider social environment as relatively safe, and the age in question slightly decreases to 9,8 years, however, the minimal numbers accrue as well: there are fewer parents who are ready to let their children be alone in the streets at earlier age.

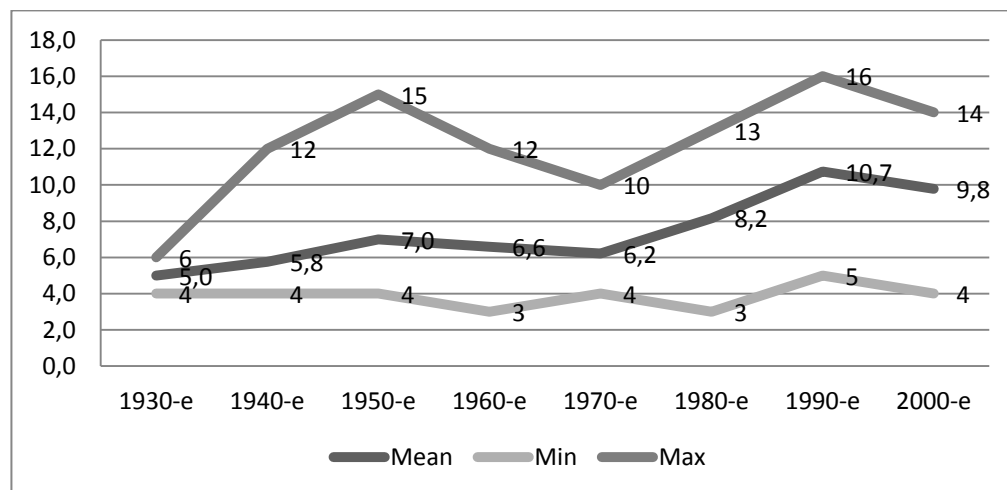


Figure 6. Age of independent mobility beginning among respondents born in different decades.

What are the types of children's street activities?

Adult respondents The geography of adult respondents' independent mobility could be described as an area that is centered in home location. With time, initially exploited house yard area, which could be easily controlled by parents, expands to adjacent locations and other attractive spots (neighborhood, streets, playgrounds and shops, friends home), swelling even more with the start of school and vocational education, and consuming all the possible locations thereafter (Table 1).

Node	Category	Mentions
Places of independent mobility for the 'beginners'	Yard	99
	Neighborhood (street, neighbor yards, waste grounds)	60
	School, school yard	26
Independent mobility space enlargement	Cultural institutions (cinema, stadium etc.)	20
	Friends' homes	16
	Places of additional education	12
	Shops, markets	8
Further independent mobility space enlargement	Parks, gardens	25
	Forests, fields, suburbs	23
	Water entity, beach	17
	City center	10

Degrees-of-freedom advance by visiting not-recommended or prohibited be adults places	All city	9
	Other cities	2
	Secret places (ravines, garrets etc.)	38
	Building sites	19
	Kindergarten place after working hours	6
	Waste deposits	5
	Cemeteries	4
	Riser blocks of flats	3

Table 1. Places of street leisure (adults, N=117).

In conquering new territories, children are usually accompanied by close friends, neighbour peers and classmates, and these roles often intersect as kids tend to go to the local schools. If a family has several children, older siblings are accounted for the younger children care during street activities. As one respondent points out, *“We would wander wherever we wanted, went fishing, swimming, hit the distant shops. It was fun, and a bit scary too. I felt awfully adult, because I was entrusted with two 4 year old brothers, and I was only 6 then”*.

This was possible because parents relied on children’s common sense and trusted the society and their kids at that times, and no instruments of direct control, like mobile phones, were available. Parents would not control children’s leisure time, and mere knowledge of their location (not necessarily correct, as it sometimes appeared) was sufficient. However, some restrictions were still imposed: among the control tools one could name negotiation of return home time, verbal limitations of street activities areas, limitation of time available for certain activities. However, these rules were not always efficient: only 51% of the respondents claim their parents to be aware of their children’s actual whereabouts, whereas the other 49% did not inform their parents of their travels, or chose to misinform them. The following confession of one of the respondents is illustrative of this observation: *“Our parents did not know where we spend our free time, because we would play when they were at work - which was about 19 hours a day. However, those younger than 15 were required to come home before 9 or 10pm. Also, parents would allow us go out after completing some household task: “You can go out, but wash the floor first””*.

The variety of the activities described by the adults in this questionnaire could be summarized in the following categories:

1. **Games** that involve role play and sports games mainly, secret parcels and messages hiding, socio-dramatic plays, plays with rules, and even gambling; this is most socially welcome form of children’s street activity. As one respondent puts it, *“I would play with my older sister’s company in all sorts of games: volleyball, football, table tennis, gorodki, bouncer, hide-and-seek, cops and robbers, throwing knives, chess and checkers. Gambling games, too.”*

2. **Communication with peers** is first seen by children as a mean of interaction in games, but then becomes a valued activity by itself. Adult respondents reflect upon long intimate conversations with friends, group gatherings with horror stories, and guitar during their child years. Often such gatherings would happen in hideouts discovered earlier as a result of children’s exploratory activities and were not welcome by adults, which only added to their value. *“There was this barn adjacent to the grocery shop near my old school building. It was totally dark inside and seemingly it was used as a storage for prickles and empty boxes from the shop. After school we*

used to sneak inside and lite candles we brought with us. It was a perfect place to plan future adventures and tell stories”, as recalls one of the respondents.

3. **Exploratory activities** aim to find out non-obvious opportunities that children’s environment could offer.

a. the unexpected vision of available objects allowed, for example, such experiences: *“I recall playing archaeologists with my older friend. We dug a dead cat in the wasteland and dug it out couple of months later imagining it to be a fossil of sorts. Another time, we were “examining” the “samples” of coal in the nearest stokehold and were too busy to mind the time. There was much ado when i got home late at night then”.*

b. using the existing, often meagre resources for constructing and inventing new objects kept children occupied no less: *“When I was a preschooler, I had a real two-wheeled bike, but it got broken too fast because all the neighbor kids were using it. I had to construct another one from the junk spare parts, and I was glad I did, even though it was quite, well, weird-looking. We would make strollers, kites ourselves, too”.*

c. harvesting berries, mushrooms, herbs served as another way of environment exploration: *“The wood started across the street, just opposite our house. We knew all the herbs names, picked mushrooms, knew best places to collect most delicious berries and fruits”.*

d. interaction with fauna offered to emotional experience and information about the world: *“We would save chicken, kittens, puppies, and find them new hosts”.*

4. **Risk behaviors** and provocations could be considered as a self-targeted exploratory activity, or a way to learn about the boundaries of own courage, endurance, ability to neglect social norms. Our respondents risky experiences do not include drug abuse but rather refer to courage tests, practical jokes and bullying. *“Parents forbade us to play in the abandoned dispensary building, but that is what we actually were doing. At 14-15 this was the favourite place for most my peers. Construction sites were popular for the courage trials, such as balancing on the top of a 2-stories high fence, or getting from one story of a constructed building to another using a cable as the only security mean”.*

5. **Cultural activities** are those determined by the environment that adults create for the kids. Among these one could name various public social events, for example, museum visits, ice skating, cinema and other, and such activities often served as an alternative to the risky unsupervised behaviors. As one of the respondents shared, *“Parents sometimes left us at home alone when they went to the countryside - me, and my classmate. We enjoyed this so much: cleaned both our flats first, cooked something special for the parents return, and then indulged ourselves in hitting the cinema, circus or the theater, went downtown. Now, wasn’t that fun”.* Even though the children’s countryside offers greater territories for exploration, children who did not have access to countryside would compensate by obtaining similar experience in urban environment. *“When I was 6-7, even 8, I would spend my freetime in the house yard. At 10-11, i went to school by bus on my own. At my grandparents countryside I could walk by myself from 3, maybe 4 years. By 7-10 years this area would expand to the whole village and its outskirts, which included the farm, the sand quarry, goat pasture, the hospital in the wood, the cemetery in the wood, the school, bomb shelter and combine-harvesters parking lot”.*

How did the children’s leisure change across generations?

This research question was addressed by the second part of the present research. The pilot study revealed that the modern teenagers were struggling to describe their everyday routine, and the initial questionnaire that was offered to the

adult sample was changed accordingly. First stage offered the respondents to read through 14 short descriptions of street activities compiled from the adult sample's stories and indicate if they had similar experiences from 1 (alien) to 5 (exactly what happened to them). The second stage implied reading another six short stories and reflecting on them briefly in writing.

For example, the least popular experience description sounds as follows: "After 7pm we would gather in the kindergarten playground situated not far from our school. We found each others company appealing, and the relative desolation of the playground and risk of being caught by adults for occupying the "wrong" place added to this feeling". (M=1.42, SD=0.73). On the contrary, most popular description goes as "*I prefer being in streets alone or in my close friends' company*" (M=3.66, SD=1.22). The description of illicit visiting construction sites and courage tests, as well as roller skating in the vicinity of home, proved to be most similar experiences to that of modern teenagers, whereas desolate buildings visits, pranks and operations with junk were rated as least frequent. The respondents typically simply denied having experienced anything similar. These activities, however, evoked greatest emotional response. Such disparity could partially be explained by social desirability bias, or by less disruptive nature of modern children's leisure activities.

In order to compare the modern teenagers leisure activities descriptions to those of the adult sample, the teenagers' answers were coded according to the common coding pattern. The frequency of the nodes' appearance could be seen in Table 2.

Node	Category	Adults	Adolescents
Games	Sport games	59	25
	Plays with rules	57	16
	Socio-dramatic plays	24	4
	Gambling games	2	1
	'Secrets'	4	0
	Creativity (theatricals)	4	1
	Teetering	4	0
	<i>In total</i>	<i>154</i>	<i>47</i>
Communication	Gatherings in secret places	24	13
	Narratives, horror stories	10	5
	Guitar playing and singing, music-making, music-listening	6	4
	Promenades along the streets, romantic relationships demonstration, gossiping	8	7
	Personal conversations	8	3
	Fights	2	0
	Dances	0	1
	Parties	0	8
	Promenades in small companies or face to face	0	25
	<i>In total</i>	<i>58</i>	<i>66</i>
Exploratory activities	Experiments	32	37
	Foraging, harvesting	12	1
	Manufacturing	11	2
	Games and treatment with cats and dogs and other pets	12	0
	Fishing	2	0
	Promenades by oneself	0	53
	<i>In total</i>	<i>69</i>	<i>93</i>
Risk behaviors	Practical jokes etc.	21	5
	Disruptive behavior	11	2
	Substance use	4	6
	Rescue the child		1
	<i>In total</i>	<i>36</i>	<i>14</i>
Cultural activities	Cultural entertainment	16	49
	Shopping	8	8
	Reading aloud, hobby games	1	3
	Studying, mobility around the places of studying	14	7
	Training of something by adults	2	0
	Visiting cafe	0	16
	Visiting mall	0	10
	Taking pictures	0	2
	<i>In total</i>	<i>41</i>	<i>95</i>

Table 2. Different activities mentions among the adults (N=117) and the adolescents (N=204).

	Adults (N=117)		Adolescents (N=88)		Difference test		
	M	SD	M	SD	χ^2	df	p
Games	1,3162	1,17187	0,5341	0,77235	23.149	4	0.00
Communication	0,4957	0,7384	1,0795	1,07449	23.537	4	0.00
Exploratory activities	0,5897	0,84235	0,1591	0,39788	19.177	3	0.00
Risk behaviors	0,3077	0,54869	1,0568	0,83539	48.255	3	0.00
Cultural activities	0,3504	0,68627	0,75	0,93772	15.582	3	0.004

Table 3. Distribution over all five categories between the adults and the adolescents.

If to support this pattern with more detailed data, the cultural activities have become more diverse and wide-spread, and involve cultural objects visits (museums, parks, ice rinks), cafes, retail shops and other public places suitable for shopping, conversing, and eating out. Notably, such activities would not be possible if the teenagers did not have sufficient pocket money for that. As one respondent shares, *“In winter we go skating to Park Gorkogo, hit hand-made markets and the like, they happen in different locations.”*

According to the study results, teenagers tend to explore the urban environment alone, seeking out amusing and aesthetically appealing places. Other experiences rather illustrate unique episodes that systematic activity: *“I like to walk alone along busy streets, watch bypassers”*; *“I love being downtown, exploring new places, stopping by new shops”*.

In contrast to the adults answers, teenagers can not boast vast experience of caring about siblings. The only instance in the teenage sample was a story about strawberries picking: *“There was this dam, and so many strawberries around! Me and my friend decided to go there another day, and took my younger brother with us. He kept on nagging all the way, so we split: one was telling tales, and another, picking the berries. I think we looked real fairies in my brother’s eyes then: of the kind that treat young boys with milk and berries”*.

The respondents did not mention any risky behaviours at all. The representative answers would be *“We like risk much less :)”*, *“No risk, I try not to go past the “stop” sign”*. The other answers could be interpreted as lassitude, more suitable for adults: *“I walk at Pokrovka and park Museon. I like sitting on a bench near my house porch.”*; *“When I am alone, I choose quiet streets that lead to the downtown and listen to music. It’s nice to sit somewhere on a bench whole day”*.

Discussion and conclusions

The present study aim was to identify the role of street activity in socialization of children and teenagers. Comparing adults’ and teenagers’ experiences makes it possible to claim that the forms of street activities have changed in the last several decades, which suggests consequential change in the role of street activity. Exploratory and risky behaviors that once comprised children’s everyday routine turn to anecdotal episodes. Accompanied by significant reduction of physically challenging environment available for kids, this trend reveals shrinkage of opportunities for modern children to train agility, courage, acuteness, and skills in decision making in complex environments and coping with stranger danger, socialization and social intelligence. On the other hand, teenagers seem to willingly consume opportunities modern infrastructure and culture allows, e.g. parks, museums, cafes, and malls, preferring safety, aesthetics and quality communication to risk taking. Apparently, these skills provide an efficient

way for teenagers to support existing relationship network and construct comfortable environment, which they enjoy.

The intergenerational differences in street leisure forms are notable and could be characterized by later independent mobility start age, shift from active forms to communication, differences in world perception (perilous and unsafe now, as opposed to inviting to exploration years ago).

Our teenage respondents did not show any particular affection to risk, which is typically ascribed to this age. Quite contrary, they appear to stick to safe and comfortable environment, or the “hearth” in Tuan’s understanding. This could be another manifestation of prolonged childhood and infantilism tendency, but on the other side it could reflect the fact that current understanding of teen age and childhood is becoming obsolete (Polivanova, 2016). It is in the domain of further research to identify the role of such environmental factors as informational noise, urbanization, overpopulation in children’s aspiration for stability, comfort and safety. In any case the finding that modern adolescents prefer comfort and safety rather than risk and adventures makes a challenge for the classical theoretical conceptualization of the adolescence as a period of the experiments, tests, and trials.

Our results make a contribution in psychological representation of the modern adolescents’ everyday life, and they open new steps to develop the research-based products for adolescents regarding their life-style. These results may be used in developing the programs for preventing different social risks (e.g. aggressive and auto-aggressive behavior, addictions, obesity etc.). Also these results may be useful in educational process, for instance in organizing unstudiedthe acquaintance within the new education group.

We should discuss the limitations of this pilot research that we hope to go through in the further studies. First, two samples are not homogenous by the regions and the types of inhabited localities and this fact deforms results juxtaposing. Second, we analyze only self-reports, so we have only subjective representations without objective ones. Third, the stories narrated by the adults are retrospective – it means that they were being deformed during their growing up and identity developing, and also were changed because of the mnestic errors, and it is hard to know now what was really happened then. Forth, we can suspect that the adolescents’ answers may be deformed or abridged because of their ideas about social desirability. We suppose that the unification of the geographic background of the respondents, expanding the sample, and including the objective data in the research design will improve the accurateness of the results partly. We suppose that social-economic characteristics of the families also influence the children’s life style and street leisure, and these variables should be controlled in the future studies.

We plan to continue exploring this topic, which has received very little research attention yet, despite its evident practical significance.

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