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TWO GENERATIONS OF DEPRESSION: DISCOURSES ON EMOTIONS AUTOBIOGRAPHICAL TEXTS BY IN RUSSIAN MEN'S

Depression, as a cultural label for a specific emotional experience, is produced and shaped by the dominant emotional culture. Rapid transformations of the cultural context may result in a shift in the emotional norms that govern the experience, expression, and regulation of emotions. This article investigates how the transformation of emotional culture, following the collapse of the USSR, has influenced the experience of depression in men. This question is addressed through the generational analysis of discourses on emotions based on 30 autobiographical texts by authors of different ages. The collected texts, dating from 1976 to 2022, include personal diaries, autobiographies, and (non)anonymous posts on social networks. The identification of discourses on emotions is based on thematic coding. The analysis of these ego texts revealed four ideal types of emotional discourses: metaphorical, therapeutic, medical, and religious. Significant differences were found in how the Late Soviet and Post-Soviet generations used these discourses to conceptualize their experience of depression. Men of the late Soviet generation saw depression as a specific emotional state, on par with emotions such as sadness and powerlessness, and, in some ways similar to a specific emotion itself. In contrast, the texts of the post-Soviet generation are marked by a new emotional norm of happiness and self-realization, with an expanded use of therapeutic discourse. In this context, depression is interpreted as a failure to be a 'normal' person: happy, successful, and able to manage one's emotions.

Key words: depression, diaries, autobiographies, blogs, emotions, therapeutic culture, discourses on emotions

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Introduction

Individual emotional experiences are often shaped and produced by the prevailing emotional culture (Thoits 1989; Gordon 1989). This culture provides individuals with a framework of emotional norms that regulate how emotions are defined, expressed, managed, and experienced, thus shaping them within the confines of a specific culture (Ibid). This article argues that depression can be studied as a cultural label for certain emotional experiences that are also governed by certain emotional norms. Although there is an established tradition of studying male depression within the framework of hegemonic masculinity and masculine norms, the existing studies fail to recognize the influence of emotional culture on the experience of depression. Previous research has mainly addressed the constraining influence of masculine norms on the help-seeking behavior (Iwamoto et al. 2010; Rice et al. 2020) and the disruption of masculine identity as a result of depression (Cleary 2012; de Medeiros, Rubinstein 2016; Emslie et al. 2006). The majority of existing works is from a Western cultural context and ignores the influence of a distinct emotional culture under similar gender norms in post-socialist societies.

The emotions associated with depression, namely their expression and regulation, are determined by the dominant emotional culture. This influence becomes particularly apparent during periods of radical transformation in the emotional culture. An example of such a transformation can be found in the transition from state socialism to capitalism in post-Soviet Russia, accompanied by the emergence of a local therapeutic culture. In this article, I argue that these significant social changes resulted in the formation of two distinct generational habitus: the late Soviet and the post-Soviet ones. By examining the descriptions of depression provided by men from these generations, I aim to explore how shifts in emotional culture have transformed the ways in which emotions are defined, communicated and managed.

The two cultural contexts in question, late Soviet and post-Soviet emotional cultures, present distinct landscapes. During the late Soviet era, the 'Iron Curtain' effectively insulated the USSR from Western ideologies, and something that can be described as a unique emotional culture emerged. The emotional regime of this period has been described in the literature as restrictive as it aimed at aligning emotions with the political ideology of the Communist Party (Shalin 1996). Research shows that Soviet ideologues attached great importance to the collective emotions, or 'moods,' of society. They endeavored to manipulate these moods to foster 'appropriate' emotions such as patriotism, pride, and a sense of duty, often using media outlets such as television to do so (Evans 2015). In the terminology of the historian William Reddy, the USSR (especially under Stalin) could be interpreted as a 'strict' emotional regime. This regime engendered numerous emotional conflicts, such as the juxtaposition of love of family and love of country. Furthermore, it left few emotional refuges –

private spaces free from repressive emotional norms (Reddy 2001). The emotional culture it created, intersecting with classical Russian literature, shaped and constrained emotional practices in the late Soviet Union. This form of culture is commonly referred to as 'emotional socialism' (Lerner 2011).

Following the dissolution of the USSR, the influx of Western cultural forms led to the emergence of new cultural institutions, the transformation of old ones, and the intensive development of a distinct version of therapeutic culture (Lerner 2011). Therapeutic culture is a set of cultural technologies aimed at governing emotions (such as career management tools, approaches to family and romantic relationships, various therapy forms and interaction methods) based on adapted psychological knowledge (Ibid: 117). In post-communist countries, the elements of Western therapeutic culture were formed (Lerner 2015), such as self-help literature, the struggle for the institutionalization of psychology, and the growing influence of psychotherapy (Sirotkina, Smith 2008). Psychological terms and techniques started to permeate various aspects of daily life, influencing different types of interaction. According to J. Lerner, the post-Soviet emotional culture is undergoing a process of restructuring. At this stage, therapeutic technologies, values, and practices are taking the place of rejected elements of emotional socialism (Lerner 2015). This has led to the emergence of a localized variant of 'Western' emotional culture. Its defining features include a focus on emotional control, the pursuit of happiness, the avoidance of negative emotions, and feelings of guilt for failing to meet these standards (Simonova 2021). The new version of post-Soviet emotional culture can be characterized as a mixture of 'emotional socialism' with imported elements of 'emotional capitalism' (Lerner 2015). On the level of residual ideas of emotional stoicism and resilience, the post-Soviet context offers new therapeutic practices, such as engaging with self-help literature and consulting psychotherapists. Additionally, it offers a novel lexicon for understanding and describing individual experience – the language of popular psychology.

This transformation of the cultural context created the conditions for the emergence of a generational habitus different from the late Soviet one. According to the available literature, variations in habitus can be noted between those generations whose conditions of formation were radically different: for example, new practices appeared that influenced the formation of generational identity and style (Gilleard, Higgs 2005). In such cases, generational differences can transcend class differences, making generational optics relevant again. Regarding this transition, two historical periods have been used as a criterion for distinguishing two broad generations: Late Soviet (born between 1950–1970) and Post-Soviet (born between 1980–2000).

Generational habitus relies on internalized dispositions in the creation of emotional experience of depression. It predisposes how emotions would be defined and interpreted and, ultimately, how they would be experienced. In other words, what discourses on emotion would be used to describe and make sense of

the emotional experience. In particular, it determines what emotions would be labelled as depression and what behavior would follow. I will demonstrate that to the extent that discourses on emotions are part of the generational habitus, we can observe generational differences in the experience of depression.

Discourses on emotions as a part of generational habitus

The notion of discourses of emotions was coined in 1990 by the American anthropologists Lila Abu-Lughod and Katherine Lutz. In the introduction to their book *'Language and the politics of Emotion,'* they point out that the term 'discourse' is key to understanding the term 'emotion,' especially when considering emotions as social phenomena. Abu-Lughod and Lutz argue that studying *discourses on emotions* as social practices in various ethnographic contexts is the most productive way to explore emotions in different cultures (Lutz, Abu-Lughod 1990: 10). They define emotion discourse as situational social rules for the production of statements about emotions.

For a long time, the body was overlooked in the social study of emotions, until the synthesis of the ideas from the philosophy of mind, Bourdieu's theory of the habitus, and earlier linguistic studies created an approach that views emotions as phenomena that simultaneously exist and are produced in both the body and the mind. Historical and cultural anthropologist Monique Scheer views emotions as social practices arising from bodily dispositions given by culturally and historically specific social contexts (Scheer 2012). These practices are structured and determined by a certain habitus that begins to form in childhood as a result of the child's early interactions with the outside world. Consequently, an individual does not simply possess emotions but rather 'makes' them within the space of behavioral options provided by their habitus. Emotions thus emerge from bodily dispositions determined by a culturally and historically specific social context. The habitus, or 'knowledge of the body,' produces emotional practices, which Scheer defines as a joint activity of the body and mind. These practices may aim to evoke emotions, to transform bodily arousal into a culturally determined form of emotion, or to modify or suppress existing emotions. Scheer identifies four types of such emotional practices: mobilizing, naming, communicating, and managing.

Mobilizing practices aim to evoke or shape certain feelings and are often performed in conjunction with others. For example, courtship rituals are designed to evoke feelings of love or sexual attraction. Naming practices involve the act of identifying and assigning meanings to emotions. This process allows individuals to find common ground with others in their unique bodily and mental impulses and to categorize these emotions. Various institutions, including those generated by the therapeutic culture, arrogate to themselves the right to name emotions and commercialize this activity. The third type, communicating practices, revolves around the expression and sharing of emotions –

for example, a speech by a politician after a natural disaster. Lastly, regulating practices are embodied emotional norms, ways of managing emotions that are acquired through habitus.

Combining the approaches of discourses on emotions and emotional practices, I consider discourses on emotions as a set of naming practices that not only describe emotional experiences, but also actively produce them. These practices determine the subsequent emotional behaviors. Therefore, the study of discourses on emotions extends beyond the analysis of linguistic or 'external' manifestations of emotions in the form of words describing them, such as 'happiness,' 'love,' or 'hate.' It also includes the categories that describe bodily experience, such as 'trembling legs,' 'buzzing in the head,' which may be indicative of emotional states. As these emotional practices are produced by the habitus, they may be generation-specific due to the transformation of emotional culture during the dissolution of the USSR (Matza 2018). The formation of a therapeutic culture in post-Soviet Russia led to the emergence of new practices, emotional norms, and discourses. These factors contributed to the formation of a different habitus in the post-Soviet generation, or the habitus that could not be formed in the absence of a therapeutic infrastructure (industry of helping professionals, academic and popular literature, etc.) in the late Soviet period.

Description of data and methods

Individual narratives about their own experiences, commonly referred to as ego-documents, have been recognized as a valuable source of empirical material. These documents offer insights not only into the actual events experienced by individuals, but also into their inner worlds and the ways in which they interpret reality. Given that my research focuses on emotional practices, such ego-documents provide an ideal medium for exploring the inner world of individuals experiencing depression. In this study, 'ego texts' are defined as texts of an autobiographical nature that encapsulate the author's personal perspective on the events of their life.

For the purpose of the research, a sample comprising 30 ego texts written by men born between 1949 and 2003 was compiled from various sources. It was generated in three distinct stages. First, based on a keyword search¹, eight personal diaries were uploaded from the website of *Prozhito*, a popular online project that collects personal diaries. The term 'depression' was used to characterize a diagnosis, emotional state, illness, etc. The sample did not include diaries in which 'depression' was used as a geographical or geological term. The authors of these texts were born between 1949 and 1977. Secondly, personal diaries and autobiographical posts detailing personal experiences of depression were selected using keyword searches on the internet. These ego texts

¹ The word 'depression' and its derivatives were used as keywords.

were published on various online platforms, including the social network *Instagram*, the author's content sharing platform *Peekaboo*, and the online diary service *LiveJournal*. This process yielded 16 autobiographical texts. Of these, 13 were retrospective descriptions of experiences with depression, while three were ongoing diaries. The authors of these ego texts were born between 1962 and 2003. Thirdly, in the first quarter of 2022, the Faculty of Sociology of the European University in St. Petersburg sponsored an autobiography competition specifically for men with experience of depression. Invitations to participate were disseminated through various Russian media outlets (*Knife*, *Domashniy Ochag*) and online psychological support groups in social networks popular in Russia. We received eleven autobiographies, which were anonymized and subsequently evaluated by an expert panel of social scientists¹. From these submissions, nine ego texts were selected for inclusion in this study's sample, with the author's age indicated. These authors were born between 1984 and the early 2000s.

The empirical data collected can be categorized according to two criteria. Firstly, the ego texts used in this study differ in terms of temporality: the analysis included both diaries, which unfold narratives over time, and autobiographical materials that offer retrospective accounts of depression. Secondly, the materials differ in terms of their intended audience: some texts were created for public consumption and a wide readership, while others were originally composed for private reflection. Despite these distinctions, I argue that the data are comparable and can be used effectively to discern the emotional discourses that men use to articulate their experiences of depression.

A careful examination of the diaries reveals that the emotional experience of depression is often a barrier to continuous journaling. Intense emotional experiences or, conversely, states of apathy, are predominantly described retrospectively, after the fact. Notably, across all data types used in this study, the time between the experience of depression and the creation of a text about it does not exceed one year. Consequently, the temporal structure of the description of this emotional experience is consistent across all the sources collected.

The variation in the mode of publicity or openness to the general audience among the ego texts warrants a more detailed commentary. Authors of public diaries on platforms like *Instagram*, *LiveJournal*, or *Peekaboo* explicitly cater to an external audience, such as a subscriber or a random Internet user. In contrast, authors of private diaries seem to write only for themselves. However, researchers specializing in ego-documents argue that even private diaries have an 'indirect addressee.' This is a reader who is not directly addressed, but whose perceived presence influences the author's choice of form and content (Zaliznyak 2010). Diary authors often implicitly refer to virtual communities whose opinions or confessions are relevant to the authors at the time of writing

¹ The criteria for evaluation were explicitly stated in the invitation to the contest and included coherence of the text, thematic fit, and structure of the text.

the texts (Savkina 2021). It can therefore be concluded that both public and private ego texts are essentially addressed to a real or imagined reader.

In order to identify discourses on emotions, the presence of the author's personal assessments in the text is of paramount importance. This feature is consistently present in all the documents included in my sample. The texts were free from external editing and censorship (unlike, for instance, media publications on depression) and contained first-person assessments.

The analysis of discourses on emotions was conducted using latent thematic coding (Braun, Clarke 2006; Byrne 2022). The themes identified through this process were interpreted as interrelated elements of discourses on emotions. As a result of the study, four ideal types of discourses on emotions were identified: metaphorical, therapeutic, medical, and religious. Notably, generational differences were observed not only in the way these discourses are used to describe depression, but also in the emotional norms that constrain emotional experience.

Four discourses on emotions

Through the analysis of the ego texts, I have identified four discourses on emotions that authors use to articulate their emotional experience. These discourses are ideal types that mix and intertwine in real documents. They are accessible to men across generations. However, there are generational differences in the way the discourses on emotions are used in the texts: e.g., how often and in what cases they are used, what list of situations they characterize.

Metaphorical discourse involves the use of metaphors to describe emotions. Within this discourse, a diverse array of metaphors is used, with the most common metaphors employed to describe depression being references to emptiness, descent, death, or apocalyptic scenarios such as the end of the world. In this discourse, emotions are described as entities that overwhelm and dominate an individual's mind and body. They are depicted as phenomena that 'occur' to a person independently of their will. It has been observed that metaphors describing emotions often encapsulate bodily experience. Several hypotheses could explain this phenomenon. Firstly, previous research has found that men often characterize depression in terms of physical symptoms (Addis 2008). Perhaps the bodily dimension makes emotions more salient, and thus worthy of attention and detachment from the individual's will.

Linguists have noted that emotions are states that are difficult to articulate in literal language: they can only be labeled (Ortony, Fainsilber 1987). The use of metaphor as a naming practice implies figurativeness, vividness, and expressiveness. Many writers resort to the use of fixed expressions, such as 'the ground fell out from under my feet' or 'my whole life flashed before my eyes.' Others strive to find their own unique descriptions, which allow them to preserve the individuality and uniqueness of their emotional experiences. For example, one

author of a public blog about depression and psychology on *Instagram* uses unconventional metaphors to communicate his distinctive experience:

[Depression is] the lack of life on the inside while there is visible vitality on the exterior. When only the shell remains and the inside filling burns out and vanishes into the unknown. It's as if there's a small hole someplace in the body that allows all vital forces to escape (b. 1995).

Therapeutic discourse is distinguished by the use of specialized terminology to name emotions, often employing psychological terms. People who are proficient in this discourse tend to discuss emotions more frequently, probably influenced by their immersion in a therapeutic culture that pays attention to one's emotions. There are several ways to acquire this linguistic proficiency, ranging from undergoing psychotherapy to watching pop psychology videos on *YouTube*, and reading self-help literature. Therapeutic discourse implies that emotions can be subordinated to a person's will, and that there are techniques for managing them that will allow a person to keep them under control at all times. The local post-Soviet brand of therapeutic discourse is consistent with that described in the existing literature (Illouz 2008). For example, one author used specific words such as 'stress' and 'rumination' to describe his experience of depression:

A bigger problem for me is rumination, endlessly rehashing everything that's happened to me and pondering how I might have fixed it. It's been a struggle for years, and it's really tough for me to just stop. At best, it'll take me from 10 minutes to half an hour to break out of it, but if I'm dealing with some serious stress, my rumination can drag on for over an hour, sometimes even two. (b. 2000).

This author does not use metaphors to describe his symptoms – instead, he uses the universal language of popular psychology, internalized through popular videos and articles on the internet. As we will see, the use of therapeutic discourse to describe emotions does not imply a reliance on any of the therapeutic practices. We can suggest that popular psychology discourse should be adopted long before the habit of therapeutic interventions, such as individual counseling or self-help techniques.

In medical discourse, emotions are conceptualized as symptoms of illness, and this language is marked by the use of specialized terminology for naming emotions. Within this discourse, depression is categorized as an illness, a pathology that is amenable to correction and, if necessary, medical intervention. Emotions are perceived as biological in nature and, as physiological manifestations of bodily functions, beyond the individual's volitional control. The approach to dealing with emotions in medical discourse typically involves psychotherapy or medication therapy, both of which aim to stabilize the emotional state. This discourse in its pure form is especially characteristic of men with a medical background. For example, this author (b. 1962), who is a medical practitioner, writes in his online diary: *'April 3rd. I've got sociophorm somatic*

dysfunction with melancholic-depressive features, and so, here are some songs.' Despite diagnosing himself already in April, at first, he initially tried to manage his depression without medication. Only six months later, unable to cope with the disturbing symptoms of low mood, he writes:

November 19th. Everything feels nauseating and utterly hopeless. And it's not just me; the people around me feel it too. I can't even imagine what event might shake me out of this. I hope, at least, that our leaders feel the opposite – may God grant them health and happiness. Starting next month, I'll try SSRIs after all. Maybe they'll help a bit.

In religious discourse, emotions are viewed as integral to one's spiritual life and are assessed according to religious precepts. Certain emotions may be deemed sinful, such as despondency. Depression, as an emotional experience, can also be interpreted through a religious lens; for example, as a *'loss of God.'* In this framework, emotions are believed to be influenced or moderated by religious practices, including prayer and confession. This is the least popular emotional discourse among men in my sample. The popular artist from Saint Petersburg, Andrey Monastyrskiy (b. 1949), is a notable example. In 1982, he wrote: *'Woke up in depression. Not to indulge in despondency, not to let it escalate to despair (through prayer, verbal suggestion).'*

Generational differences in the application of discourses on emotions

Firstly, there are certain similarities in the way men of different generations describe depression. For example, as noted above, depression has often been written about in retrospect. On the one hand, it is a condition that requires validation – by a professional, others or time. It is noteworthy that men willingly used the word 'depression' to describe the condition of the people around them, especially women, but found it harder to apply the label to their own experience. On the other hand, as noted at the beginning, intense emotional experience is an obstacle to taking regular notes or writing long texts. Secondly, when discussing their experiences of depression, men often frame it in terms of 'insufficiency' and regret for the lost state. Men from the late Soviet period tend to lament the loss of peace and quiet, while those from the post-Soviet period mourn the absence of happiness. Thirdly, for men across generations, the emotional experience is closely linked to the bodily experience. This link is articulated through various metaphors employed to describe emotions.

To highlight the generational differences in the use of discourses on emotions within ego-texts, I will focus on two interrelated aspects of emotional experience: depression and happiness.

Individuals from the late Soviet generation mainly used metaphorical discourse to describe their emotions or simply declared their depression to the

imagined reader of the diary. In their narratives, depression is portrayed as a mood, comparable to emotions such as sadness, melancholy, and apathy. It can be said that depression itself resembles a certain emotion and therefore needs no further explanation.

Depression is temporary, like any other emotion, and just as difficult to deal with. It is considered a fatal condition, unwanted but powerful. Interaction with emotions is practically not expected; it is important to resist them, but a person's will to manage these states has its limits. With a few exceptions (related to the men's occupation), the authors of the diaries studied did not take any deliberate action to deal with their depression. Suppressing painful memories and distracting themselves with work or alcohol were common strategies for dealing with depression. What is not subject to man, is only subject to time. For example, the author of this diary does not believe that the emotional state that is so distressing to him can be controlled, and hopes that time will help:

It appears to me that I will never be able to live as I have been <...> And before it happened, it was difficult—for various reasons or as a result of a combination of life's adversities, psychological pressure from various circumstances. However, it appears that it has never been as bad as it is now <...> My mind is a complete mess; my thoughts are jumbled and I can't put them together in any way. Will this state ever pass? They claim that time cures all wounds... (b. 1953).

Interestingly, references to happiness are scarce in the diaries from the late Soviet period. In the few instances where it is mentioned, happiness is depicted as an elusive goal in contrast to the Stalinist period, where happiness was often portrayed as a collective objective (Fitzpatrick 2004). In the late Soviet man narratives, happiness becomes an individual project, but one that remains elusive. Happiness is no longer located in the future, but is still available to the fortunate few. Historian Cynthia Hooper notes that in the late Soviet era, the quest for personal happiness, embodied in eternal love and true friendship, was a legitimate aspiration (Hooper 2018). It is worth noting, however, that one can only know post factum whether love was eternal, and friendship was true. This perspective is echoed in the diaries, where late Soviet men often discuss happiness in its absence—for instance, when they long for a reunion with loved ones that has yet to happen, or when they reminisce about time spent together. Conversely, it is not happiness but peace—characterized by the absence of intense negative emotions, worries and anxieties—that is most desired as a counterpoint to depression. The post-Soviet men, whose texts are the subject of this article, are implicitly oriented towards a new norm that is contrary to the experience of depression. This is a happy person who is able to enjoy life, work effectively and solve the problems that arise before her. Happiness, in this context, is not seen as an aspirational goal but as a standard—a state that all 'normal' people are expected to have. The inability to experience pleasure in life and overall unhappiness are viewed as deviations from this norm, indicative of illness and failure to conform to normalcy. The emotions associated with depression are often seen as the individual's control, but

sometimes the help of a professional is needed. In order to legitimize the appeal to a professional, depression is discursively constructed as a serious illness, with an emphasis on its potential harm to health and life. Therefore, in rationalizing the use of antidepressants, several authors claim that untreated depression can escalate to the most serious consequence – suicide.

Interestingly, in some cases, therapeutic discourse exists without therapeutic practice. This situation occurs when emotions are perceived as being under personal control and defined in psychological terms, but the only techniques employed to manage them are 'avoidance' or 'suppression':

There is severe anxiety that can catch me for no reason, and for many of my triggers, many of which I try to avoid, and this greatly interferes with my daily life – I have to build my life in such a way that I take into account that time, which I may need to avoid them all, or intentionally meet them if there is simply no time left. For example, before beginning university studies (b. 2000).

The author of the quoted fragment characterizes anxiety in psychological terms, acknowledging specific triggers that significantly complicate his life. Despite this recognition, he sees no alternative strategy beyond avoiding these triggers.

It is also typical for the post-Soviet generation to problematize the absence of emotions. In other words, a rich emotional life is considered the norm, and a lack of emotional intensity is pathologized and declared a symptom of depression. Based on a metaphorical discourse, post-Soviet men write about the fading of feelings and the sensation that 'life itself' is slipping away. This perspective differs markedly from that of the late Soviet generation, who directly associated negative emotions with depression, not the lack of emotionality. This shift in the problematization of emotional experience may indicate an evolution in masculine norms, where lack of emotionality is no longer seen as a standard for men. Thus, one of the authors writes that in the absence of emotions, he felt he had to pretend to be 'normal,' which caused him additional distress:

It is really tough to convince yourself and others that you are experiencing the same feelings. This causes even more despair and emotions of inferiority; they claim everyone is having fun, but I'm not. I grin because everyone else is smiling, and I mimic (imitate, copy) to feel like part of the 'flock' (b. 1995).

The author feels the need to imitate emotions in order to appear 'normal' and feels the pressure of society when the expression of emotions becomes impossible for him. His comment highlights how closely the normative behavior of modern man is connected with the display and experience of emotions and how narrow the corridor of socially acceptable emotional behavior for men is: not the absence of emotions, but also not their excessive display.

Moreover, the authors of the post-Soviet generation particularly problematize the impossibility of crying. For example, one of the autobiographers, describing his attempt to commit suicide during a depressive period, wrote:

Most of all, I wanted to cry at this point. Wow, what a dramatic scene! It's so difficult, and I want to cry! I couldn't, however, cry. In principle, I couldn't cry for an entire year, but I hoped that something would happen now. Something fresh, unexpected, and extremely sick <...> But then something unexpected happened: there were no feelings. I tried hard, occasionally making grunting sounds in the hopes of eliciting a powerful feeling, but nothing happened (b. 1994).

The absence of feelings and the inability to cry frightens the author. At the culmination of his depressive period, he strives to feel every emotion and tries to evoke them. This moment becomes a turning point for him: not only does he realize that he cannot end his life, but he also understands that it will not get any worse. After several months of struggle, as documented in his autobiography, he finally overcomes his depression and begins to experience emotions again.

Thus, men from the post-Soviet generation regard happiness as a new emotional ideal that can be achieved through proper management of one's life and emotions. They view depression as the opposite of happiness, and thus abnormal and pathological, and describe it in terms of therapeutic and medical discourse. In contrast, their counterparts from the late Soviet generation perceived depression as a temporary (but extremely powerful) mood, one that overwhelms personal will. For them, happiness was seen as elusive and rare.

Conclusion

When it comes to identifying the dominant discourses used by Russian men regardless of generation to describe their emotional experience, the metaphorical and therapeutic discourses emerge as the most prominent. Moreover, the latter did not replace the language of metaphor, but complemented it, expanding the possibilities of talking about emotions. These discourses serve distinct purposes: metaphorical discourse is used to depict emotions, while therapeutic discourse is employed to label them. By assigning specific names to emotions, such as apathy or rumination, the authors 'dissect' and analyze their emotional experience and make it manageable.

The use of therapeutic language without therapeutic practice suggests that therapeutic discourse has become a conventional mode of articulating emotional experience. It standardizes the nomenclature of emotions, suggesting a universality of emotional experience. Consequently, by using the language of psychology, authors not only standardize their emotional narratives but also make them intelligible to a global readership. While metaphors might be culturally specific, terms such as apathy, anhedonia, and rumination are universally recognized within the global therapeutic culture.

The analysis suggests that there are generational differences in the experience of depression, which arose as a result of significant shifts in emotional culture. Post-Soviet men show a tendency to use therapeutic discourse to articulate

their experience in the absence of psychotherapy. Within this discourse, they frame a new emotional norm –happiness – which is understood in terms of pleasure, efficiency, and self-realization. Conversely, men from the late Soviet generation engage in a predominantly metaphorical discourse, viewing depression as a kind of overwhelming 'mood' that dominates the will and subjugates other feelings and intentions. For them, depression is perceived as a powerful, inevitable, but temporary condition. This analysis documents a gradual generational shift from a passive endurance of emotions to an active and conscious management of them. This reflects the idea of moving from a 'regime of fate' to a 'regime of choice,' as described in the literature (Aronson 2021). Emotions have become something to be managed, and their proper regulation is now seen as a necessary skill for modern men, who are expected to be active and effective in their pursuit of happiness.

Description of the field data

Autobiographies (2022)¹

A7, born in 1983

A5, born in 1984

A11, born in 1990

A6, born in 1992

A8, born in 1994

A9, born in 1994

A1, born in 2000

A10, born in 2000

A2, born in 2000

Diaries published in the project 'Prozhito'²

Andrei Monastyrsky, born in 1949; records available from 1981 to 1984

Valery Varzatsky, born in 1950; records available from 1970 to 1981

Nikolai Rogozhin, born in 1952; records available from 1978 to 2014

Yuri Pominov, born in 1953, records available from 1988 to 2004

Serzhan Kazakpaev, born 1961, records available from 1983 to 1984

Igor Ovsyannikov, born in 1962, records available from 1981 to 2005

Andrey Yevtushenko, born in 1966, records available from 1991 to 2013

Ilya A., born in 1977, records available from 1985 to 2013

¹ Authors' names are encrypted to maintain anonymity.

² Since the project diaries are published in the public domain, I do not hide the names of the authors and do not use pseudonyms.

Blogs (B) and posts (P) on the Internet¹

B1, born in 1962, records available from 2014 to 2022

P12, born in 1987, recorded in 2016

P7, born in 1987, recorded in 2018

P6, born in 1990, recorded in 2019

B2, born in 1991, records available from 2020 to 2023

P5, born in 1992, recorded in 2019

P8, born in 1992, recorded in 2015

P11, born in 1994, recorded in 2020

P4, born in 1994, recorded in 2014

B3, born in 1995, records available from 2018 to 2023

P1, born in 2000, recorded in 2015

B4, born in 2001, records available from 2015 to 2018

P10, born in 2003, recorded in 2022

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¹ Authors' names are encrypted to maintain anonymity.

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