

## [Scientific Articles]

Andrienko O.A.

*The Semiosociopsychological Paradigm and the Development of a Communication Strategy for a Charity*

# THE SEMIOSOCIOPSYCHOLOGICAL PARADIGM AND THE DEVELOPMENT OF A COMMUNICATION STRATEGY FOR A CHARITY

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### **Abstract:**

In this article, a charity as a social institution is defined by the author as an organisation that helps individuals with problematic life situations to resolve their situations if they cannot do this for themselves.

Analysing the development of communication strategies in charities, the author focused on several problems that inhibit the adequate and effective functioning of charitable programmes. These problems include different images of the world held by the different parties involved in charitable projects, the absence of common goals, and social conflicts, which prevent service recipients from solving their problematic life situations. These obstacles are serious, and the author considers that they need to be solved for charitable projects to achieve their goals.

The introduction of dialogue and two-way subject-to-subject communication—essential elements of the semiosociopsychological paradigm—can assist in eliminating these problems. The foundations of two-way communication—socialisation and prosocial behaviour—are the main steps towards engaging in charitable acts with correct altruistic motivation.

This article argues for the effectiveness of the semiosociopsychological paradigm for developing communication strategies for charities, since it affects the interactions of people with their environment, enabling the donors and recipients of charitable acts to form a unified image of the world and create goals for charitable projects, thus eliminating misunderstanding among charitable project members.

**Keywords:** semiosociopsychological paradigm, charity, social conflicts, image of the world, two-way communication, prosocial behaviour, socialisation

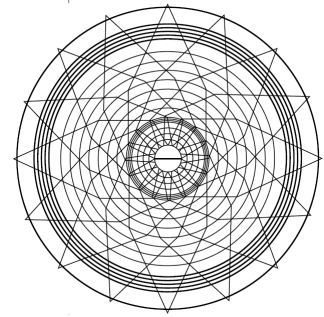
### **Introduction**

Charities are public social institutions and their main role is to help countries' vulnerable individuals and create the conditions for healthy sociopsychological environments in communities. As a social institute, a charity has to align with certain national mechanisms and policy documents. Sometimes states unite with a common goal to help a particular sector of society, in which case the charity becomes international in its scope of activities.

## [Scientific Articles]

Andrienko O.A.

*The Semiosociopsychological Paradigm and the Development of a Communication Strategy for a Charity*



The main objectives of the Institute of Charity include:

1. Providing social support and protection for citizens.
2. Assisting in strengthening peace, friendship, and harmony between peoples, and preventing social, national, and religious conflicts.
3. Contributing to the protection of motherhood, childhood, and paternity.
4. Other objectives as specified by law.

The main players in a charity include philanthropists, volunteers, donors, beneficiaries, and the organisers of volunteer activities (i.e. non-profit organisations; Federal Law N 135-FZ, 1995).

The importance of a charity as a social institution is determined by the functions it performs:

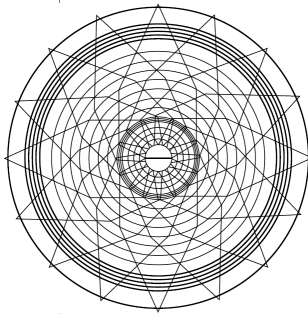
1. Management—regulating relations between the involved parties.
2. Social—assisting the members of society who need the most support, thus providing them with a better quality of life.
3. Economic—supporting the state in protecting the needy population when the state is unable to provide appropriate material or other benefits, thus filling gaps in the economy of a certain country.
4. Educational—educating society about the value of charitable donations and encouraging altruism among its members.

These functions have an impact on social development by helping the members of communities to either fulfil their role as donors or, as beneficiaries, to change their lives for the better.

The parties involved in an act of charity are referred to as donors, recipients, and intermediaries (i.e. charitable organisations). A donor becomes one when the individual develops a sense of altruism based on his or her prosocial behaviour. The recipient becomes one when the person has a problematic life situation that they cannot cope with alone and is ready to accept help, such as time, money, and effort expended by the donor in a desire to assist. A charitable institution acts as an intermediary donor and manages charitable projects by working closely with donors and recipients, providing information to donors about the current situation and distributing funds or other objects of donation to appropriate recipients.

An act of charity consists of a simple process, including the following:

- The occurrence of a problematic life situation for a beneficiary.
- The beneficiary's needs.
- The intervention of a charitable organisation and/or donor offering help to the recipient.
- The benefactor's goals, which may be altruistic or egocentric.
- The act of charity itself, which includes the direct activity of the donor providing assistance in addition to the act. The results may be positive, implying that the donor will be able to help the recipient, or negative, when



the recipient either does not solve the problem or the assistance of the donor or intermediary aggravates the recipient's problematic life situation.

### **Socialisation as a Step towards Prosocial Behaviour**

In order to prevent negative effects, it is necessary to consider how altruism and prosocial behaviour develop. The basis for these concepts is socialisation, which is one of the most important steps in personal development. Socialisation is the process of assimilation by an individual of a certain system of knowledge, norms, and values that allow them to act as a full member of society (USSR Encyclopedic Dictionary, 1989).

In fact, it is the presence of a person in a social environment that helps them to form their own system of values, because a sociopsychological community is a collective unit that specifically defines a person's social nature:

Engaging diverse activities in the team through various relationships, [people] somehow 'soak up' the culture of the society in which they live, not only by gaining experience, but also by developing personal qualities that allow them to generate new values and to strive for new meanings to rise in their further development and self-actualization (Gritsenko, 2011).

It is the social experience of a person that helps them to adapt to the conditions of a changing world, as well as to develop their own ways of thinking and adopt social values based on public values.

Private goals and values harmonise when they are subordinated to the common goal of a certain group of people, which is realised collectively by people. Erich Fromm explained this phenomenon of cooperation in social life, highlighting the necessity for individuals with their own private experiences to jointly overcome social chaos. He wrote that people need a map of the social world (i.e. a general view of the value system typical for society in general):

Without a united picture of the world and our place in it, people would simply be confused and would not be able to act purposefully and consistently, because without it, it would be impossible to navigate and find a starting point that would allow putting in order all the impressions crashing down on each individual. Our world becomes meaningful, and we gain confidence when our ideas are aligned with what surrounds us' (Fromm, 2000).

Socialisation thus gives meaning to personal existence, shaping social roles and statuses that make up social spaces. It functions through social institutions: organisations and individuals who perform certain functions and are united around a certain social goal. The impact of a social institution on the participants involved in its activities is generated through a set of well-established principles, sanctions, rules, and rewards specific to a particular type of society.

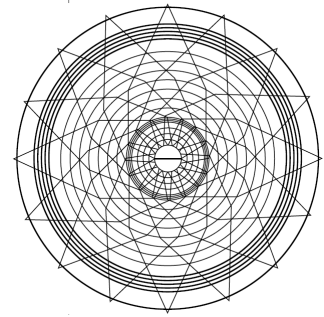
### **Prosocial Behaviour as a Step towards Charity**

People's socialisation has a positive impact on society, since it forms social groups based on interests and shared empathy; thus, charities as social institutions are

## [Scientific Articles]

Andrienko O.A.

*The Semiosociopsychological Paradigm and the Development of a Communication Strategy for a Charity*



formed through socialisation. One of the important features of a charity is its members' pro-social behaviour—the result of successful bilateral communication within the semiosociopsychological paradigm. Prosocial behaviour is based on altruism as a special type of motivation for an individual to provide help.

Prosocial behaviour has its roots in social capital. The success of charitable programmes is derived from social capital, which in the social sciences is defined as the ability of community members to self-organise to solve socially important problems. The term was first used by Pierre Bourdieu in his article 'Forms of Capital' (Bourdieu, 2002), in which he defined social capital as: 'the aggregation of actual or potential resources which are associated with inclusion of mutual obligations or recognitions in a strong network or more or less institutionalised relationships' (Bourdieu, 2002).

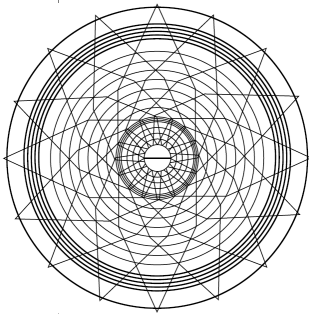
Putnam (1993) viewed social capital as a combination of three aspects: reciprocity norms, trust, and social networks, while Weber (1996)—the founder of comprehensible sociology—formulated four types of social action in descending order according to their reflexive components: purposeful, value-rational, traditional, and affective. Lindenberg (2006)—a Dutch scientist and professor of cognitive sociology—addressed the problems of prosocial behaviour, distinguishing several types of prosocial behaviour:

1. Cooperation
2. Justice
3. Altruism
4. Reliability (trustworthiness)
5. Respect for the interests of others.

All these types of prosocial behaviour are united by their similarities in terms of their selective sensitivity towards objects, situations, and the actions that are the most effective in achieving goals. Lindberg referred to the combination of a goal and a cognitive setup as a frame. Frames are derived from 'mental models' or 'images of the world'. Prosocial behavioural frames are formed under the influence of internal and external factors: the individual characteristics of a person and the normative values that organise the social space. The first includes empathy, cognitive skills, and locus of control; the second involves cultural beliefs and social status. The internal locus of control distinguishes a psychologically mature person and qualitatively characterises all types of prosocial behaviour.

Heckhausen (1986)—a proponent of Gestalt psychology (a German school of thought)—added another feature to the list of prosocial behaviours developed by Lindenberg (2006): helping behaviour, which he defined as actions carried out for the benefit of others and for which there are no external rewards, includes sharing, giving, helping, and encouraging.

Usually, the decision to help is influenced by emotional factors: compassion for those in need and a sense of duty to help. However, prosocial behaviour does not rule out rationality in the behaviour of the helper. Help can be either useful or harmful. If



## [Scientific Articles]

Andrienko O.A.

*The Semiosociopsychological Paradigm and the Development of a Communication Strategy for a Charity*

you give money to an alcoholic neighbour, this may be perceived as help, but what will the result be? A drunk neighbour raging in the back yard? Such a result would hardly be valuable. If sponsors visit an orphanage and give the children expensive gifts, the orphans could form an entitlement philosophy and learn to live lives of over-dependence on others, which would also be undesirable.

Questions arising from the ambiguity of helping actions motivated the study of cognitive psychologists Howard and Schwartz. In 1981, they proposed a model of helping action, which included five cognitive processes that characterise the logic of the helping decision-making process: attention, motivation, evaluation, protection, and behaviour (1984). We would like to add another component to this model: intention, placed between attention and motivation. 'Intention is any manifestation of human activity in the environment' (Dridze, 2000). Motivation initiates human activity; 'therefore, "intention" is interpreted here as an equal of motive and purpose, or rather, the desired result of activity, communication and interaction of people with the world around them' (Dridze, 2000). Society can change under a person's influence when they create patterns or examples of behaviour using intentions. 'Intentions, usually, are not expressed verbally in texts. The verbal embodiment or wording can be found only in relation to some components of the intention, such as the idea or purpose of the message' (Shilova, 2006).

The Howard and Schwartz (1984) model is applicable from the moment an individual realises that someone needs help. The attention phase includes recognition of someone else's distress, selection of an effective prosocial action, and the distressed person's readiness to accept help. We have already explained intention above. The essence of the next (motivation) phase is to construct a personal norm and to actualise personal responsibility based on social values, followed by a sense of moral duty. The third stage (assessment of the expected consequences of pro-social actions) includes assessment of potential costs and benefits. The costs in this case consist of social costs (e.g. the risk of social disapproval), physical costs (pain), and moral costs, which can result from a violation of individual norms. At the protection stage, a person may develop grounds for refusing responsibility for someone else's misfortune. They may prioritise personal interests and dismiss responsibility for others as an unfair expectation, because people follow normative expectations in relation to the level of rewards and penalties they believe they deserve. Additionally, a person's decision to act or not act may conflict with other obligations, or the person may decide that they lack the ability and resources necessary to intervene. The final step (the action or refusal to act) depends on the outcome of the decision-making process.

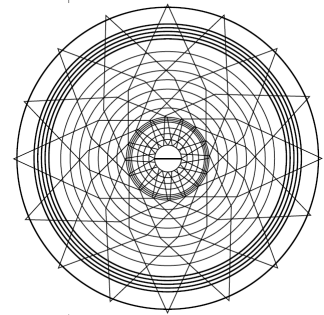
Supportive behaviour is therefore characterised by a complex reflexive structure. Decision-making is influenced by various situational factors, such as evaluations of costs, benefits, and external actions that provoke doubts and cognitive conflicts, deterring or blocking prosocial action. Unselfish or altruistic motivation is the key to understanding motives for charitable acts.

Having analysed models of helping behaviour, let us now move on to its motives. The motives for helping behaviour can be classified according to their moral value

## [Scientific Articles]

Andrienko O.A.

*The Semiosociopsychological Paradigm and the Development of a Communication Strategy for a Charity*



and, usually, we recognise two types of motivation: altruistic and egoistic (Ilyin, 2013). At the core of helping behaviour at the highest moral level there is an altruistic motive; when people want to do a good thing and help, they act from a 'pure heart' and want to make the world a better place. Selfish motivation is helping others in order to gain benefit or recognition for oneself or to avoid shame. This behaviour is associated with the expectation of reciprocal help, the desire for gratitude, and the mitigation of negative feelings (a burden) caused by the distress of a person in need.

The American social psychologist Charles Cooley described egoism as the inability to acknowledge certain social situations or the ability to assess them differently, thus affecting feelings of the companion: 'the inability to subdue their sensual urges to social norms ... undoubtedly due to the lack of imagination, which should encourage such submission' (Cooley, 2000).

Empathic attitudes that trigger altruistic motivation play an important role in the development of prosocial behaviour. This term was introduced by the American social psychologist Daniel Batson, who defined it as:

An emotional response oriented towards another person, induced and coinciding with the supposed response of the one who needs it. Empathetic anxiety about the other person is focused on the fact that it includes a feeling for the other. It includes feelings of sympathy, compassion, tenderness (Batson, 2008).

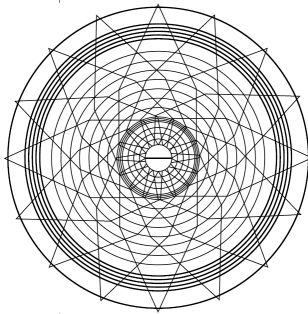
Cooley (2000) once used the equivalent term 'sympathy', meaning 'the ability to share any mental state'. To understand a person in a difficult position, it is enough to sympathise with that person; it is not necessary to pity the person because, according to Cooley, pity is:

In itself most often a useful and healing emotion, calling for good deeds, but sometimes is a sign of a lack of true empathy. We all want to be understood—at least in what we consider our best sides—but only a few of us want to be pitied, except in moments of weakness and depression'.

Batson and his colleagues (Batson et al., 1981) conducted a series of experiments proving that egoistic motivation can be 'cured' by making a person feel what another person who needs help feels.

Similar conclusions were reached by Bandura (2000) — a Canadian-American psychologist known for his work on social studies theory. He explored the ways in which people acquire a variety of complex behaviours in social environments. The scientist concluded that the principle of involved, pluralistic, empathic communication styles plays a crucial role in pro-social behaviour. An effective method of overcoming conflict and developing empathic motivation is to work together towards a common goal and learn from each other to develop your own examples of selfless help.

Altruism is a special form of pro-social behaviour, the purpose of which is to help another person without expecting anything in return, and its history is rooted in moral philosophy. The term was first proposed by the philosopher and positivist Auguste Comte, who used it to mean the opposite to egoism, saying: 'Altruism is the true foundation of personal morality' (Comte, 2012). The scientist prioritised social interests over personal ones.



Immanuel Kant argued on a similar topic when he spoke about a categorical imperative, the essence of which was as follows: 'Act so that the maximum of your will could be a universal law' (Kant, 2015). According to Kant, the desire to be worthy of happiness is the main goal of society, and this goal can be realised through the fulfilment of a duty that takes the form of a categorical imperative. The fulfilment of duty implies selflessness.

The Russian philosopher Vladimir Soloviev also reflected on this topic, exploring the nature of pity in his work *Justification of Good* (2000) and finding its source in the 'organic connection of all beings' and altruism.

Prosocial behaviour thus plays a primary role in motives for charitable acts. Altruism and empathy are the tools that raise awareness and give purpose to helping behaviour, which is important for the effective functioning of charitable programmes because, on the basis of altruism and empathy, a dialogue is built between members of charitable projects.

### **Charity and Problems impeding Charitable Acts**

Another important aspect of understanding charitable acts is the image or view of the world that influences the perceptions of situations requiring social assistance. Without such a worldview, charitable programmes can have destructive social effects.

The transition to an effective communication strategy, involving all the stakeholders in a charitable act, includes solving the problem of different views of the world held by the parties and finding common features in their thinking that will play a unifying role in their common goal of (in the case of this research) helping children.

I assumed that the resolution of this problem is possible under several conditions:

1. organisation of effective continuous bilateral subject-to-subject communication between the parties involved in charitable acts
2. identification of conflict situations in building communication and ways to resolve them
3. development of a communication strategy based on the solved problems and unified worldviews.

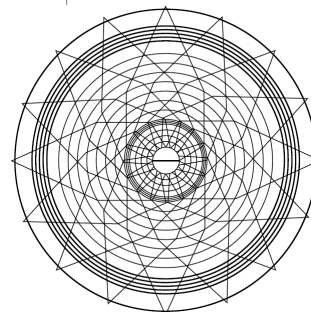
A charitable act includes a recognition of a problematic life situation (Dridze, 2000) — a stage at which an individual decides that someone's usual life-course has failed and, to change the situation, it is necessary to expend both physical and mental resources. It is at this stage that an exchange of actions takes place, involving two-way communication.

Solutions to problem situations are based on the creation of behavioural patterns founded on communicative activity, underpinned by a semiosociopsychological paradigm, which sees social communication as a tool for creating social culture and psychology through sociocultural activity and interaction between individuals in a society. Through multi-way communication in subject-to-subject relationships, people self-organise to solve problematic life situations.

## [Scientific Articles]

Andrienko O.A.

*The Semiosociopsychological Paradigm and the Development of a Communication Strategy for a Charity*



In this research, before conducting a case study on a Spanish charity programme that helps Russian children, we examined Spanish and Russian perceptions of charity using two analytical methods to gain a better understanding of the perceptions of charity in these two countries. More detail of our methodology is given in the following sections.

### **Analysis of Media Articles Reporting on Children's Problems and Charities in Spain and Russia**

We analysed texts relating to charitable institutions in Spain and Russia using discourse analysis and intentional (motivational and goal-oriented) analysis. We deliberately chose two methods in order to compare meanings that might be lost if we used them separately and achieve a higher level of analysis.

We identified texts that mentioned appropriate charitable institutions using the keywords 'children', 'problems', and 'charity' in relation to Russian and Spanish mass media, respectively applicable to each analysed country.

To search for relevant articles, we used the LexisNexis library (LexisNexis)—the world's largest online library of business information—and the Google search engine. The period of analysis ranged from 5 November to 30 December 2012. This period was chosen because of the introduction of a bill banning the adoption of Russian children by Americans in Russia, and we planned to use the same timeframe to research philanthropy in other countries.

**Table 1.**

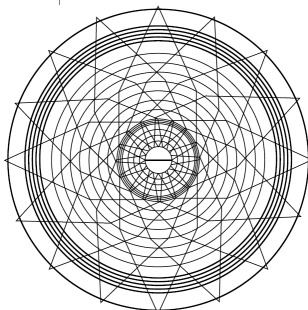
**Number of Publications Connected to Children's Charity Topics by Country**

Country	Number of articles fully devoted to children's charities	Number of articles mentioning children's charities
Spain	21	112
Russia	32	191

In the Lexis Nexis library, the query 'children, problems, charity' resulted in 21 articles devoted to problems concerning children's charities in the Spanish media and 112 publications in which the above words were mentioned; in the Russian media, 32 articles were devoted to children's charity and 191 articles mentioned this topic.

Discourse is a communicative event that occurs between a speaker and a listener in the process of communicative action in a particular spatial and temporal context. This communicative action can be verbal, written, or have verbal and non-verbal components, according to the theory formulated by Van Dijk (1998) — a professor at the University of Amsterdam. We also used the definition of Foucault (1996), who characterised communicative discourse as a 'form of construction of social practice and power struggle'.





**Table 2.**  
**Media Exposure Sampling in Spain and Russia**

<b>Spanish media</b>	<b>Russian media</b>
El Pais	Commersant
La Rexion	Vedomosti
El Mundo	Nezavisimaya Gazeta
Faro de Vigo	Moscow News
El Correo	MediaRyazan
Levante	Irk.ru
20 Minutos	Krasnoe znamya
	Yuga.ru
	Amurskaya Pravda
	RIA-Novosti
	Interfax
	Tass

*Discourse Analysis of Media in Spain*

A distinctive feature of the discourse in the Spanish press was the dominant theme of children and parents. Clearly, in the perceptions of Spaniards, the well-being of children was associated with the institution of the family, rather than with state bureaucracy or the non-profit sector; therefore, a large number of publications focused on parenting.

Spanish society is considered to be one of the most religious of the European countries, which explained the noticeable presence in its media of publications on moral topics, particularly those devoted to the problem of children’s disrespect for their parents. We also identified a discourse regarding the conservatism of Spaniards and their adherence to traditional Catholic values.

We observed that the most fervent public opinion concerning the problems of children occurred in Spain. The variety of publications on this topic reproduced to a large degree the metascript of traditional family virtues: the age specifics of education, recommendations for the organisation of children’s leisure time, psychological problems in the relationships between adolescents and parents, and similar.

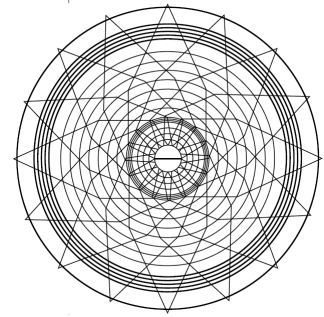
*Discourse Analysis of Media in Russia.*

Having analysed the nationwide media in Russia, we identified the dominant discourse as relating to problems in the field of child protection that must be solved promptly. This discourse showed that the national media had a greater influence on the audience than the regional media, and was thus more likely to change the situation for the better.

## [Scientific Articles]

Andrienko O.A.

*The Semiosociopsychological Paradigm and the Development of a Communication Strategy for a Charity*



Having applied discourse analysis to Russia's regional media, we observed that the way of life of local communities in Russia was constructed according to laws that differed from the reality projected by the national media. The discourse of Russia's regional media asserted that philanthropy is good on any scale. As an extension of this discourse, local communities were encouraged to take practical action in the field of charity and to help children by buying a painting, going to a ball, volunteering at a kindergarten, etcetera. It was in the regional press that the voice of positive public sentiment was expressed in Russia, but few people read it. Additionally, the local press did not have the same influence as the central press; therefore, only local residents were likely to know about charitable projects, actions, and local charitable foundations in their regions.

### *Motivational-Target Analysis of Media in Spain and Russia*

To carry out the intentional motivational-purpose analysis, we relied on the works of Dridze (2000) and Adamyants (2020) and, for working with the article texts, we used a motivational-target structure.

Intentional motivational-purpose analysis is a qualitative research method developed within the semiosociopsychological framework of social communication. It is based on the empirically proven universality of intentional (motivational-purpose) principles underpinning all types of social communication and the possibility of distinguishing in any integral, completed communicative act (work, material, etc.) It involves a hierarchically organised structure of communicative-cognitive programmes focused on intention (Adamyants, 2015).

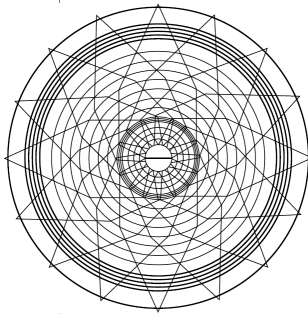
This method allowed us to identify problematic situations regarding charities and their causes, conduct a dialogue with readers, and analyse the behavioural aspects of the audience in relation to the charities.

### **Results of Motivational-Purpose Analysis of Spanish Mass Media.**

Through motivational-purpose analysis, we identified an intention in Spanish media to foster children's respect for adults. A number of articles addressed the issue of children's respect and esteem for their parents and elders; for example, we identified implicit motives for accusing parents of being weak in their parenting, and calls for them to seek help from psychologists, since disobedience of elders is not normal in Spanish society and is regarded as an illness.

Also, manipulative publications were identified in which the theme of beneficence was used to introduce new images. Motivations were the tacit encouragement of breastfeeding and—in a separate article—the advertising of a tag device, which, according to the article, was an aid for teaching children to read.

The method also revealed another communicative intention: to invest in the education of children, due to the problem of a lack of qualified teachers in classes.



### **Results of Motivational-Target Analysis of Russian Media.**

Motivational-target analysis of the Russian press allowed us to reveal the hidden intentions in Russian society concerning charity: to educate all members of society (authorities, commercial organisations, and volunteers) on the benefits of engaging in charity. We revealed the following problematic situations connected with this intention:

- Misinterpretation of charity goals by corporate volunteers (volunteers who give their time for the purpose of corporate engagement rather than altruism)
- Insufficient donations due to the difficulty and lack of knowledge regarding donations. The articles highlighted the ease of making online donations.

We also identified an intentional declaration of authorities' mistakes in the organisation of institutions for children, linked to the low quality of social institutions for children (particularly children's hospices).

The next intention we noted within the framework of motivational-purpose analysis was an orientation towards dialogue, openness, communication, and the improvement of the charitable sphere. One of the articles highlighted the successful functioning of a Novosibirsk hospital, in which local authorities had developed close collaboration with local charities to support children. The article indicated that orphans fared better in care of volunteers than children in Moscow hospitals.

Convergence (i.e. rapprochement) between the two methods was the result of our analysis of texts related to charities in both Russia and Spain. Discourse analysis allowed us to 'drill down' to the level of themes and ideas and clarified meanings relating to charity and the social protection of children. The motivational-purpose analysis allowed us to identify intentions and problematic situations and clarify their meanings in relation to charity. We concluded that Spanish children's charities were distinguished by their orientation towards the family and the return of traditional family values. The Russian orientation, by contrast, was characterised by the planning of strategies to improve the quality of children's charities.

### **Case Study**

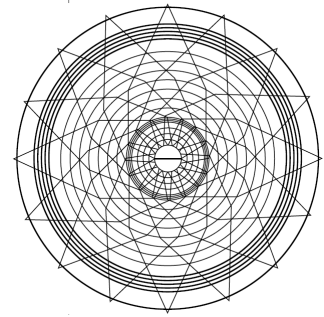
Following the textual analysis, we conducted a case study regarding a charity called Leticia Cativa, the programmes of which have suffered the negative impact of an ineffective communication strategy. In particular, we considered an example from this charity programme in which a communication strategy had a destructive effect, examining how the application of a semiosociopsychological paradigm favourably affected the social design of a communication strategy.

The Spanish charity Leticia Cativa (Galician for 'little joy'; authors' note) has been cooperating with the Russian charity Our Future since 1993, organising annual trips for Russian children to stay with Spanish families for whole summers in order to provide medical treatment for children affected by radiation from the Chernobyl nuclear power plant accident in 1986. Our Future selects children who have the right to resettlement in the Novozybkovsky district of Bryansk Oblast, and Leticia Cativa has established a

## [Scientific Articles]

Andrienko O.A.

*The Semiosociopsychological Paradigm and the Development of a Communication Strategy for a Charity*



framework of cooperation only for children living in an area where the background radiation level is above normal.

The programme itself is extremely useful, and we identified several positive outcomes:

1. Visits of children to Spain—a sunny country where many fruits contain essential vitamins.
2. The opportunity for children to learn Spanish and become proficient after two or three trips (children's agile minds allow them to acquire some proficiency after only a few weeks in Spain).
3. The funding for the trip is covered by Spaniards, since many of the children's parents cannot afford to cover the costs.
4. The children's medical treatment is also funded by Spaniards, which, again, few parents can afford.
5. Being in Spain expands the children's horizons.

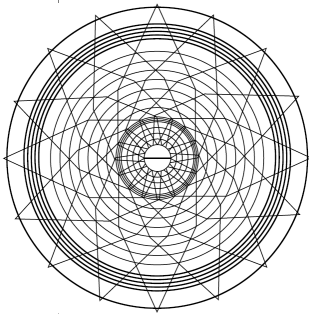
Membership of Leticia Cativa allows Spanish families to host children for two months. It is possible for both high- and low-income families to join the organisation, but to host a child for the summer, they must have certain living conditions, such as a separate room in the house. Members of the organisation who are unable to host children for the summer can still help the organisation financially. The Russian children are selected by Our Future, which functions as a mediator in Russia and selects those children who most need help, using Russian interpreters (usually Spanish language students who are over 18).

The selection of Russian children from the Bryansk region was dictated by the Spanish organisation: the CEO of Leticia Cativa specifically wanted to work with Russian children affected by the radiation from Chernobyl.

Most Spanish families are friendly and helpful towards the children; for the two months the Spaniards host them, they take care of their health needs, diet, and leisure activities, and also buy them numerous clothes and gifts, which the children can take back to Russia. During a timeframe of about ten years, a Spanish family may host the same child over consecutive summers until the child reaches adulthood.

The Spanish are the benefactors whose service should ideally help children, and the children are recipients of charitable acts. The charity organisation is

The problem is that the involved parties have ambiguous perceptions and evaluations of the programme. The Spanish organisation is well aware of it, while the Russian organisation, on the other hand, has very little awareness and even distrust of the programme. Unfortunately, Spaniards are poorly informed about the mentality of Russian children and their sociocultural characteristics. We identified the following negative effects of the previous communication strategy of this charitable programme: low awareness of the Russian parties involved, including the children and their parents, about the goals and objectives of the project; distrust towards Spaniards who take children for two months; unwillingness of parents to allow their children to go to Spain; lack of two-way communication between children and their parents during the



## [Scientific Articles]

Andrienko O.A.

*The Semiosociopsychological Paradigm and the Development of a Communication Strategy for a Charity*

period of their stay in Spain; and low awareness of the social and cultural characteristics of the Spanish parties. These problems resulted in some Russian parents not allowing their children to revisit Spain after their first trip.

There have been accusations of children being sent back to Russia prematurely during their first stay in Spain due to incompatibility with the Spanish families; although this did not happen, there were precedents. Also, some Spanish families noted the bad behaviour of the children, which contributed to a distorted perception that the purpose of a child's visit was for the Spaniards themselves and the problem due to their intolerance of Russian children's crying and/or their demands for gratitude from the Russian children (i.e. their manipulation of the children's perceptions of the environment).

When developing a communication strategy, it is important to consider a project's goal. For Leticia Cativa, the goal of the project was to enable as many Russian children as possible to travel to Spain and return to Russia healthier than when they left; thus, the goal of the communication strategy was to provide a common semantic space for mutual understanding and respect for common project goals.

### *Reasons for Choosing the Semiosociopsychological Paradigm*

For us, the choice of the semiosociopsychological paradigm as the basis for building a philanthropic communication strategy was that 'semiosociopsychology is the theory of social communication as a universal socio-cultural mechanism' (Dridze, 2000).

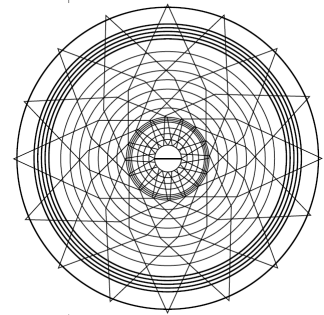
The author of the semiosociopsychological paradigm was Tamara Dridze (1930–2000)—a well-known Russian professor of sociological sciences and a chief researcher at the Institute of Sociology of the Russian Academy of Sciences. Semiosociopsychological methods and approaches developed during 1969–1974 within the framework of the Public Opinion project headed by the famous Russian sociologist B. A. Grushin. The semiosociopsychological paradigm is the basis for human interaction within the environment and the creation of images of the world; behaviour, the actions of people, and the environment involve the people themselves in two-way communication with each other. A strict condition of communication is its dialogical nature, since dialogue helps to direct and distribute communicative and cognitive actions and prevent manipulation in communication. Engagement in dialogue provides a 'subject-to-subject' setting for partners to communicate and interact, in which the partners are equal, want to consider situations from both points of view, and aim to find common ground. Also, subject-to-subject communication modifies or updates the partners' already existing and possibly contradictory images of the world.

We took this paradigm as a foundation because it most clearly supported the goals of our work: to form a common conceptual space between the Spanish and Russian parties and, in a more global sense, to identify communication strategies in the social design of philanthropy, evaluate their effectiveness, and develop recommendations for their improvement.

## [Scientific Articles]

Andrienko O.A.

*The Semiosociopsychological Paradigm and the Development of a Communication Strategy for a Charity*

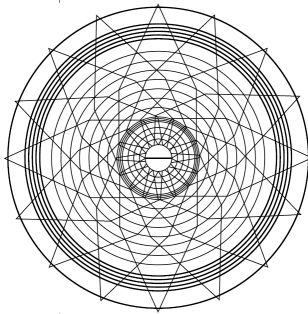


‘The subject of semiosociopsychological research turns out to also be the socio-psychological regularities of introducing text-generating intellectual sign-thinking activity into public practice, people’s ways of life, culture and public consciousness’ (Dridze, 1984). At the same time, achieving mutual understanding and creating a unified image of the world is the ultimate goal of this paradigm, which is why we valued it as a foundation. We conducted an in-depth analysis of perceptions of the charity by both parties involved in a charitable project then, based on the analysis, we found common ground to define shared meanings. After shared meanings were formed, we had an opportunity to unite the recipients’ worldviews and promote a common image of the world. This enabled members of the society to mobilise behind a common cause and perceive it in the same way, in turn allowing them to avoid conflict situations and run the charitable project effectively.

Since the situation involved the interaction of several parties—children, Spanish families, children’s parents, and Spanish and Russian charitable institutions—the communication was not bilateral but multilateral. We relied on the same author’s concept of prognosis social projecting—a concept based on ecoanthropocentric paradigm that considered ‘removing the interdisciplinary barriers artificially erected (including through language metaphors) between various “branches” of knowledge about man, nature and society’. This was achieved, in particular, by introducing as a fundamental aspect of the thesis: that the social institutions of society are a crystallisation of a continuously occurring iteration, or metabolism (exchange of matter, energy, and information), between man and his environment.

The central place in the ecoanthropocentric paradigm of social cognition and social synthesis is accorded to the study of mutually transforming processes, mechanisms, and socially significant consequences of interactions of humans with their natural, cultural, and social environments (Dridze, Technology of prognosis social projecting and social communication in ecoanthropocentric paradigm of social cognition). The idea is that effective communication relies on involving all the parties in the cognitive process, taking into account the complex knowledge accumulated by each of them that affects their mentality, sociocultural background, cognitive processes, and emotional content; in short, awareness. When designing communication between the subject (donor) and the object (beneficiary) in a charity, we believed that it was necessary to use this method of analysis and examine the communication process ‘from within’, through the eyes of the participants. It was therefore necessary to correctly interpret certain events on both sides and to extract the meanings understood by the participants in the charitable projects. This is why the semiosociopsychological paradigm was appealing to us.

Interactive exchange occurs continuously between individuals, and it was the individual, not the group, that was important for us, because individuals make decisions; interact with other individuals, under pressure from either the environment or themselves; and thus create groups, because groups are changeable precisely because of the activity of the individuals within them. A person is thus the starting point of a linked human–environment (sociocultural) chain, involving interaction based



on communication. Communication was the link between the Spanish and Russian parties who, as we discovered, had different backgrounds and mentalities but were united around a common goal. Communication was a tool to achieve mutual understanding, develop a means of communication that would be understandable for both sides, and build a common platform for action.

Children from the exclusion zone created after the Chernobyl disaster need help, not only with medical treatment, but also in familiarising themselves with the new environment when they go to Spain for treatment as part of Leticia Cativa's charitable project. Children cannot change the duration of their trips, but the organisation's employees can help them to change their negative impressions of Spain, generated by fear and uncertainty, to positive ones, by reshaping the format of communication with the members of Leticia Cativa.

### *Problematic Life Situations in the Leticia Cativa Project and Ways to Solve Them*

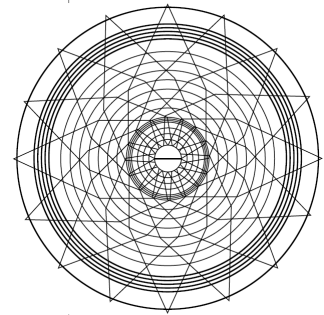
In the case of Leticia Cativa, the overarching problematic life situation (addressing the medical needs of the children) could be solved if the principles of two-way communication (i.e. children communicating with both their parents and with the hosting Spaniards) were respected in the functioning of the project. Unfortunately, in reality, a second problematic life situation arose because of the inadequate communication between project participants. This situation was the children's unwillingness to adapt to Spanish ways when visited Spain, their total rejection of Spanish culture, and as a result, the risk of psychological trauma for 'abandoned' children. Violation of the rules of communication thus led to negative consequences for the project's functioning; instead of assistance, the children received the opposite, and the goal of the charitable project could not be achieved, resulting in the direct opposite of well-being.

Children who found themselves in unfamiliar Spanish families, with whom they had never previously spoken, overcame this problematic life situation in the ways their social capital allowed. Due to their age and adults' lack of awareness of the project, the trips to Spain became problematic life situations for them, since they perceived the world around them according to the casual attribution we mentioned previously, whereby 'each person gives other people motivations and gives the objects certain qualities in accordance with their own nature and their own vision, always in accordance with their personal attitudes, value orientations, interests, etc.' (Dridze, 2000). In this situation, both the Spaniards and Russians suffered from problems regarding their perceptions of each other, comprehension of the situations in which they were involved, and difficulties in finding common ground; therefore, communication dysfunction occurred and it was difficult for them to interpret each other's intentions, requiring 'translation' in this situation. The children needed to be educated and provided with new information that they could integrate into their existing images of the world, so that they could enter an appropriate frame of mind to adopt a new culture and new environment.

## [Scientific Articles]

Andrienko O.A.

*The Semiosociopsychological Paradigm and the Development of a Communication Strategy for a Charity*



Another problem in the effective functioning of the charitable project related to cross-role social conflicts. Such conflicts arise when an individual, due to certain circumstances, is forced to perform several social roles that contradict or conflict with each other. We agreed with Parsons, who wrote that social conflicts occur when expectations from actors about their supposed social roles do not coincide:

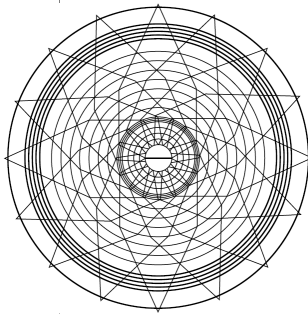
One very important aspect of connecting an individual with the social system should be briefly mentioned. When an organised system of interaction between the ego and the 'other' becomes stable, mutual role expectations about the actions and attitudes of each of them begin to arise. These expectations represent the core of what can be called role expectations. The 'other' expects the ego to behave in some fairly specific way in a given situation, or at least within relatively specific limits. Further, the reaction of the 'other' will be different depending on whether its expectations are met or not; the fulfilment of expectations leads to rewards and/or benefits, and failing leads to the contrary (Parsons, 1996).

The requirements imposed by these roles may be mutually exclusive, in which case a conflict is inevitable. It was therefore important for the managers of the charitable project to understand their social roles. Since Russian children coming to Spain already have parents (in most cases), the hosting Spaniards are only caregivers, with a responsibility to ensure that the children and parents understand that everyone in this situation has a common goal: to make children healthy and happy. The main mistake made by the Spaniards was that they sometimes tried to replace the children's parents, provoking cognitive dissonance in the children's minds, since they could not understand why the Spaniards were involved in their lives or why they positioned themselves as 'Spanish mother and father' when they already had parents. On this basis, we proposed a communication scenario based on a value shared by both sides: children's wellbeing. It was this shared value that provided the foundation for adjustment and positive cognitive information processing on both sides. Initially, the strategy focused on persuading the Spaniards to expand their perceptions of the subjects of their altruistic motives and recognise that they were not dealing with orphans, but with the children's families and the children as members of those families. This involved a special type of interaction between the Russian and Spanish parties—two-way communication. Secondly, the strategy was based on encouraging a semantic shift of the Spaniards' charitable motives towards altruism, which has no selfish motives, although modern people are often unaccustomed to these kinds of actions. Therefore, in this case, our goal was to convince the Russians of the reliability of the project.

Previously, we had talked about various images of the world held by the parties involved in the charitable project, which led to the Spanish benefactors, due to their lack of specific knowledge about Russian culture, behaving like 'strangers'. Different images of the world had led to misunderstanding and semantic inconsistency: 'the effect of semantic scissors':

The emergence of a semantic "vacuum" caused by the mismatch of semantic "focuses" of communication during the exchange of text activities'. This effect, which





## [Scientific Articles]

Andrienko O.A.

*The Semiosociopsychological Paradigm and the Development of a Communication Strategy for a Charity*

has a negative impact on interpersonal, as well as intra-group and inter-group relations, is also associated with very serious social consequences, as inadequate interpretations are misinterpreted scientific concepts and distorted literature sources, these are unjustified decisions and uncoordinated actions, finally, this is a simple lack of mutual understanding between people (Dridze, 1984).

This effect was evident in the functioning of the Leticia Cativa and its need to educate the various parties and foster a mutual understanding of verbal messages—‘the development of high quality semiosociopsychological training of individuals’ (Dridze, 1984), which can help to prevent communication failure and its negative effects.

### **Conclusion**

Identifying the various images of the world among donors and recipients allowed us to conclude that they were major obstacles to achieving effective communication. Finding a common denominator in different images of the world, and unifying them, allowed us to improve the effectiveness of communication between the involved parties.

Using the term ‘problematic life situation’ helped us to consider charitable acts as effective solutions for such situations, because we understood that the solution of problematic situations arises from creating behavioural patterns based on communicative activity with the help of the semiosociopsychological paradigm. The scientific significance of this paradigm lay in its use of key elements that allowed us to correctly identify ways to create an effective communication strategy.

The achievement of semantic contact made it possible to unify the different images of the world held by the donors and recipients of charitable acts and prevent misunderstandings arising from the ‘effect of semantic scissors’, as well as to eliminate communication failure.

Focusing on dialogue helps people to avoid social conflicts and solve problematic life situations by understanding that a communication strategy is a two-way process involving feedback, adequate interpretation of the environment, and achievement of meaningful contact between the parties involved in charitable acts.

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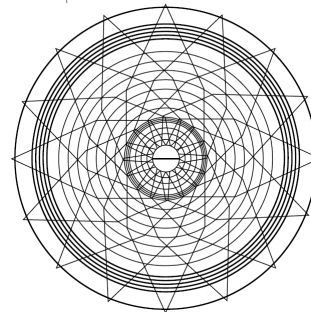
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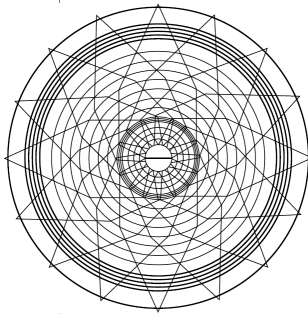
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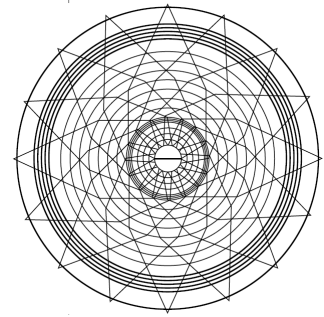
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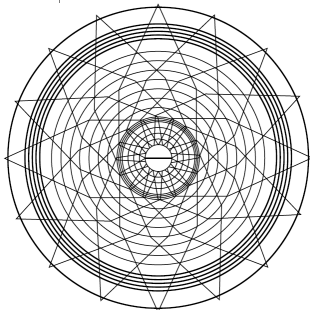


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## СЕМИОСОЦИОПСИХОЛОГИЧЕСКАЯ ПАРАДИГМА КАК ОСНОВАНИЕ В РАЗРАБОТКЕ КОММУНИКАТИВНОЙ СТРАТЕГИИ В СОЦИАЛЬНОМ ПРОЕКТИРОВАНИИ БЛАГОТВОРИТЕЛЬНОСТИ

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### **Аннотация:**

В данной статье цель благотворительности как социального института определяется автором в качестве помощи индивидуумам с проблемной жизненной ситуацией в разрешении данной ситуации, если индивид по каким-либо причинам не может это сделать сам.

Оценивая особенности построения коммуникативной стратегии в благотворительности, автор фокусирует внимание на ряде проблем, мешающих адекватному и эффективному функционированию благотворительных программ. Различные картины мира сторон, вовлеченных в проект, возникновение социальных конфликтов, мешающих разрешить проблемную жизненную ситуацию благополучателя, – данные преграды определяются автором как серьезные, и они должны быть решены, чтобы благотворительный проект исполнял свои цели.

Обозначенные проблемы возникают ввиду отсутствия общей цели проекта в картине мира его участников, однако с помощью введения диалога и двусторонней коммуникации типа «субъект-субъект» – неотъемлемых частей семиосоциопсихологической парадигмы – данные проблемные ситуации могут быть ликвидированы. Основы двусторонней коммуникации (социализация и просоциальное поведение) являются ступенями на пути к реализации благотворительного акта с верной – альтруистической - мотивацией.

В статье аргументированно обосновывается эффективность применения семиосоциопсихологической парадигмы при разработке коммуникативной стратегии благотворительности, так как она влияет на взаимодействие людей с окружающей средой, формирование единой картины мира, цели благотворительного проекта, а также устраняет недопонимание между членами благотворительного проекта.

**Ключевые слова:** семиосоциопсихологическая парадигма, благотворительность, социальные конфликты, картина мира, двусторонняя коммуникация, просоциальное поведение, социализация