

THE PARENTAL INFLUENCE ON THE FORMATION OF RUSSIAN YOUTH'S FAMILY VALUES

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Abstract

Nowadays in Russia the importance of “family” and “quality of parenting” issues cannot be overestimated because it is based on a long trend of depopulation. This study implies the analysis of value orientations concerning family and children upbringing.

The survey was conducted in the cities of the Ural region, Russia in 2013-2014. The results of a qualitative study of young people's views on the family and parenting are presented in this article.

The analysis of essays identified three categories of respondents who gave typical descriptions of the parental family: “Gratitude description”, “Neutral description” and “Problem description”. An explicit interrelation between inherited social experience in the parental family and the image of the future family was noted. The results revealed the importance of the family for youth in modern Russia.

We can assume that modern youth who were born in a turning point of Russian history has successfully adopted traditional family values and behavioral models. This creates conditions for demographic policy aimed not only at population growth but also at improving human capital quality.

Key words: qualitative research, values of youth, family models.

JEL Code: J11, J13.

Introduction

Currently, there is an extremely negative demographic situation in Russia. It is caused by several reasons: negative forecasts for Russian birth rate, influence of the intrinsic structural factor (reduction in the proportion and number of women of childbearing age) (Vishnevsky, 2008), family institution crisis as well as commonly spread social norms of small families. Existing demographic problems demand innovative approaches and using a wide range of tools for their solution. Many solutions lie in

strengthening the institutional foundations of the family in Russian society.

The results of several studies in various spheres of public life indicate a significant influence of parents on value perception and behavioral models of the children (Bejanyan et al. 2015; Headey et al. 2013; Ljunge, 2015; Min and Silverstein, 2011; Sieben and Verbakel, 2013; Todorovic and Matejevic, 2014). Social experience, which is especially well acquired by a child in the parental family, is reflected in area of the matrimonial relations (Bejanyan et al. 2015; Min and Silverstein, 2011). Concerning deterioration of economic environment, parents are forced to give their children far less time because they are mainly busy with providing for their families. Therefore, the importance of other socialization factors such as media, educational system and social environment greatly increases. These factors contain divergent information flows and could potentially threaten family values stability, moral norms and develop destructive forms of reproductive behavior. All this reinforces the necessity of regulating the process of family values formation.

The aim of our study is to analyse parental influence on formation of youth's family values. The hypothesis of the study is that the formation of family values and reproductive behavior of a young person is largely driven by social experience which was acquired in the parental family.

1. Data and Methods

Quantitative methods of collecting empirical data are traditionally used for studying young people in Russia. However, combined application of analysis methods, assimilation and adaptation of methods and techniques from other scientific areas are the mainstream of modern science (Creswell, 2014). Particularly, non-numerical methods began to be actively used in economics and statistics (Kiessling and Harvey, 2005). Besides, even official statistics increasingly refers to expert assessment, etc. Accordingly, we chose a qualitative research strategy to study the influence of social experience acquired in the parental family on the family attitudes of young people. Our choice was connected with what we wanted to understand:

- 1) a social world of a person brought up in a family;
- 2) meanings which a person's judgments and actions include as well as perception of external reality, which is related to the parental family;
- 3) the interaction of objective and subjective factors in getting a general idea of their own future family.

We considered quantitative methods inappropriate for solving these problems. A qualitative research implying an open, exploratory, unstructured analysis of the problem seemed to be the most suitable for us .

In 2014 we asked 1-4 year students of technical, economic and humanitarian branches of the Ural Federal University to write biographical mini-essays. In the first part of the essay we suggested describing a family which they had grown up in and in the second part - their future (desirable) family.

The study included the following stages:

1. Written interviewing of the respondents on a given topic.
2. Deep substantial analysis of the obtained data to determine the connection between family values learned in the process of socialization and the formation of their own attitudes to parenthood.
3. Text content analysis including identification of the used expressions, phrases and images on the most important aspects.
4. Classification of response types in accordance with the obtained results.
5. Conclusions and recommendations based on the obtained results.

The method of content analysis was applied to analyse the received answers.

2. Results

The study revealed parenthood value orientation of students, its connection to social experience acquired in the parent family was confirmed. The results of the study can be divided into two groups:

- 1) The types of parental family descriptions are classified.

The classification of the responses was made on the basis of content and structure of the descriptions. Depending on this, the answers were divided into three groups. Conventionally, they were named:

- "description of gratitude" – extremely positive assessment of the social experience received in the parental family, emotional expression of love and gratitude to the family;
- "description-neutrality" – generally favorable assessment of received social experience complemented with analysis of existing problems;
- "description-problem" – extremely negative assessment of the experience received in the parental family, rejection of emotional bonds and description of acute family problems.

- 2) Several types of interrelations between social experience in the parental family and the idea of a future family are found out. They are:

- "mirror" – direct transposition of experience obtained in the parental family to the future family;

- "mistakes correction" – general transposition of obtained experience to the future family although containing correction of some problems;

- "reverse" – a model of reproductive behavior is based on the principle of opposing individual's own behavior to the parents' up to complete unwillingness of having a family.

3) It is found that the interrelations between social experience received in the parental family and the idea of a future family mainly come from the type of parental family descriptions.

In particular, respondents who portrayed their parental families through the "description of gratitude" are mainly characterized by the first "mirror" interconnection type between received social experience and the idea of their future family.

The respondents of this group vividly express their gratitude to the parent family. "Description of gratitude" contains a lot of emotional adjectives to describe the feelings and relationships using lofty style: "family is sacred", "I adore them", "my family is perfect", "family is everything", "I grew up in a wonderful family", and "I am pleased with and proud of my parents".

These students assess experience of their parental family as positive and transpose it to their future family as the necessary one. For these students family became the main sphere of socialization and achievements, personal development ("I owe everything to them", "I gained the whole life experience from the lessons of my family", "I appreciate their opinion", and «I owe everything I have to the family»). While answering a question about their future family, these respondents repeated the words that they had used to describe parental family, often the same constructions: "I want to be a father like mine", "for me they are an example", "I want to create a similar family", "I want the same friendly family", "I want the same integrity", "I want my wife to be like my mother", "I will follow the example of my family."

Respondents, whose family experience is expressed through the "description-neutrality", mostly show the second type of interrelation between received social experience and the idea of a future family – "mistakes correction" – in their works.

"Description-neutrality" is a group of responses that are not related to the "ideal" type, and it is the absolute majority of the total number of the essays. Predominantly, they are friendly-neutral but there is also a description of some problems. The following scheme of answers is usually presented: 1) factual description of the family (the number of members,

their occupation, history, leisure, values), 2) characteristics of relationships between family members, 3) description of a problem (explicit or implicit), 4) description of respondent's own attitude to this problem and its solution.

Attitude to the problems and their solutions, described by our respondents, were reflected then in the description of their future family. Therefore, the second type of interrelation between received social experience and the idea of a future family is building respondent's own future correcting "parental" mistakes; it is so-called "mistakes correction". For example, if the respondent complained that in his childhood parents had paid little attention to the development of his abilities in sports or arts, he described his future family through a desire "to be able to devote as much time to children as he can" or "to engage children into different activities and workshops".

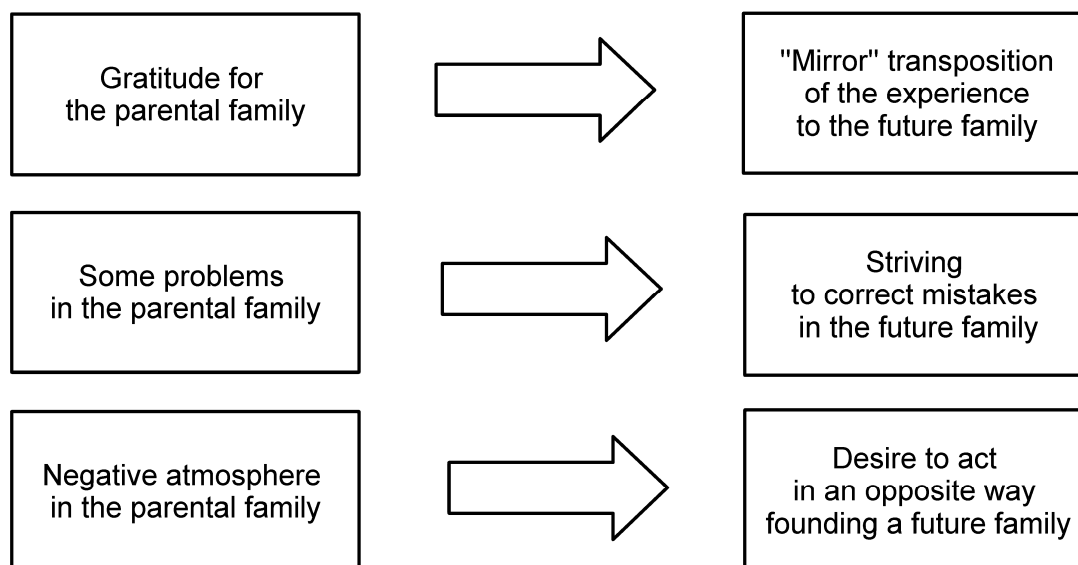
The last group of respondents, whose story about the parental family was named the "description-problem", mainly demonstrates the "reverse" type of interconnection between received social experience and the idea of a future family.

"Description-problem" is a group of responses with the description of a very troubled family. Negative experience received in the family is reflected in two ways: one is the gratitude, despite their experience; another is opposition to parents coming up to undisguised hatred. Therefore, the description of desired family was built either on total opposition to the parental family or even on the refusal of attempts to have a family: "actually, I haven't fully understood the concept or definition of the word "family" yet..." (answering a question "What family would I like to create?"); "...As written above, I do not clearly understand the word "family", "What do I see in the future? Well... nothing... I don't want to have children because I have the same personality as my mother does. And I'm afraid that my attitude to children will be selfish... ". Thus, the type of "reverse" interconnection was registered only in extreme cases.

The overall response level was quite high judging by the depth and problem introspection level as well as the level of interaction with the interviewers. It indicates a high level of significance of family problems and values for the respondents.

The interrelations between the types mentioned above are shown in figure 1.

Fig. 1: Fig. 1: The types of interrelations between social experience in the parental family and the idea of a future family



Conclusion

In the course of the study we checked the following widespread ideas concerning value degradation of modern youth in Russian society:

1. General value disorientation of young people, breaking continuity of generations (Ahmetyanova, 2014).
2. Displacement of traditional gender roles towards feminization of man and masculinization of women (Bondarenko and Tishchenko, 2012).
3. The priority of material welfare as a guideline for choosing a partner and a basis for creating and proper functioning of a social unit (Gorshkov et al. 2011).
4. Careless attitude to family relationship breakdown, focus on the change of partners in case of conflicts, marriage "polygamy tendency" (Vishnevsky, 2008).

The data of our study shows that the existing negative and stereotypical assessments of youth's values degradation are exaggerated. Particularly:

- 1) The stereotype about value disorientation of young people and breaking continuity of generations in learning social experience.

Please note that the selected group of students has certain peculiarities. The period of their socialization matches early 1990s when the complex socio-economic changes destroyed the existing values and principles. During that period there appeared so-called "value vacuum" when the Soviet ideals were destroyed and the new ones were not created yet (Gnevasheva, 2010; Talalaeva, 2008). This demographic and social situation provided

certain conditions for disruption of generation's continuity. It provoked a number of stereotypes about the generation that was caught up in value disorientation conditions at the young age.

The analysis of our study results has shown that there is a close interconnection between the inherited social experience of building family relations in the parental family and the idea of the future family. This disproves the stereotype about breaking the continuity of generations. Family attitudes can vary up to the opposite depending on how the obtained experience was evaluated by the respondent (either positively or negatively) but its acquisition is doubtless.

Moreover, students refer to marital unions of their grandparents often taking them as sample of marital relationships and positive experience (according to our respondents, they show "principles of the old school," the example of relationships built "in a proper way") what indicates a deeper connection between generations and inheritance of traditional values. However, a desire for large families is not formed in the minds of young people. Most of the respondents are focused on two-child family (sometimes it was formulated as "I want to have two, well... maximum three children"). These intentions were proved by such statements as "a child should not grow selfish", "it's great to have brothers and sisters".

2) Revealed in our study, the tendency of returning to traditional norms and values partially refutes the stereotype about gender roles shifting. This is evident due to a significant number of roles' descriptions in the family (for example, through the idea of who should earn money to keep the family). The third part of the works from both girls and boys specifically highlighted the division of roles "dad is the earner, and mum is a housewife". There were traditional phrases such as: "my wife will not work", "the main thing is that my relatives are healthy and happy, I will take care of the rest by myself" (young man's essay), "husband should manage money in the family", "mother should raise children so I will work to give her that opportunity".

3) The stereotype about priority of material welfare as a guideline for choosing a partner and as the basis for creating and proper functioning of a social also wasn't confirmed. General analysis of the answers showed that respondents didn't pay that much attention to money and family provisions. This issue is presented in the problem field, but mostly as a factor of "providing children with everything necessary", "the opportunity to travel with the whole family", "opportunity to spend time all together and not to worry

about anything". However, the key role in each biographical essay was given to the emotional bonds between family members.

4) The stereotype about careless attitude to the breakdown of family relationships, focus on the change of partners in case of conflicts, marriage "polygamy tendency" can be criticized. The results of our qualitative research on young people's views on family and parenthood showed extremely negative attitude of Russian students to the disintegration of the family, change of partners in the case of conflicts and marriage "polygamy tendency". High value of family integrity was revealed. In descriptions of desired relations in future family young people focus on stability and indisputable monogamy of their union ("iron marriage", "I want to find my only one"). At the same time support, trust, mutual understanding were rated higher than love, passion and romance.

This may be connected to the fact that the childhood and adolescence of the respondents began in difficult socio-economic period of mid 90s, when significant social and economic difficulties caused a high rate of family breakdowns. Parents' divorce, described in many essays, was a hard experience. Many respondents described it as a serious disaster, no one considered it as a positive experience and "wouldn't want their children to experience the same". Assessments of parental behavior in the situation of a break-up tend to the idea that problems must be solved together, and they are not the reason to change the partner ("perhaps it was the stage that you just had to go through", "we all have problems", "of course, anything can happen"). Also respondents condemned careless ("only few dates before") creation of family.

Thus, we can conclude that the generation, which was born under the threat of breaking generations' continuity, successfully learned traditional family values and models of behavior. Comparison of the stereotypes and real values is shown in table 2.

Tab. 1: The comparison of the stereotypes and real values of youth

Stereotype about the youth	Reality
Value disorientation of young people, breaking continuity of generations in learning social experience	Close interconnection between the inherited social experience of building family relations in the parental family and the idea of the future family
Displacement of traditional gender roles	Orientation on following traditional gender roles
Priority of material welfare as a guideline for choosing a partner and a basis for creating and proper functioning of a social unit	The key role is given to emotional bonds between family members; material welfare is important but not the top priority

Careless attitude to family relationship breakdown, focus on the change of partners in case of conflicts, marriage "polygamy tendency"	Extremely negative attitude to divorces, "careless" marriages, the priority of family relationships over flirtation
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Source: compiled by the author.

It provides favorable conditions for an active demographic policy considering the perception features of this population stratum. Parenthood image quantitative study of the sample with similar socio-geographical characteristics also proves this optimistic tendency (Bagirova and Shubat, 2014).

Population policy should be aimed at strengthening the institutional foundations of the family and the development of pluralism of family structures. It is necessary to support multigenerational families with close family bonds or at least nuclear families with several children as a traditional family pattern.

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