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## The Family in Value Orientations

*Russia's declining birth rate is linked to a delay in a family's decision to have children and to uncertainty about the place of children in a couple's relationship. Despite the rise of individualism and the importance of career and self-realization, however, the family retains a very important place in Russian society.*

Russia's ongoing processes of change in the everyday lives of Russians in the course of the transformation of Russian society have to do with processes that are linked to the transformation of the institution of the family and that determine what is called demographic modernization [1]. Demographic modernization is characterized by the fact that “all of an individual's thoughts are focused on achieving self-realization, on freedom of choice, on personal development and an individual lifestyle, on emancipation, and this is reflected in the formation of the family, and in attitudes with respect to birth regulation and motives of parenthood” [2, p. 3]. Inasmuch as this process is associated with the nuclearization of the family, with the rise in the age at which people marry and have children, and

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with the modification of the forms of marriage and parenthood, it is of timely relevance to most countries of the world. A variety of terms are used to refer to these changes and to describe the current state of the institution of the family, such as crisis, evolution, modernization, and transformation [3; 4]. From our point of view, it is more valid to speak not so much of a crisis of the family but, rather, of a crisis of the institution of the family (a narrower aspect), or of the transformation of the family in the absence of normative models. This is because, as shown by studies in Russia and other countries, despite the modification of value attitudes, in particular the rise of the value of individualism and the importance of career and self-realization, the family, far from ceasing to be important, has actually become a very important value. An individual's family situation is able to determine his behavior in all other spheres [5], it is able to foster or thwart his work activity, to encourage particular types of consumption, and to determine his sense of psychological well-being and thus influence his health.

At the present time, 14 percent of Russians are not married and have never been married; 59 percent have an officially registered spouse; 6 percent are in a civil marriage; 2 percent are not married but have a regular partner; 9 percent have been divorced; and 10 percent have been widowed. Since there are fewer men than women in Russia, men are more likely to enter into a second marriage, as noted by a number of researchers [6].

According to a survey of people's everyday lives, 88 percent report that family is very important to them, while 11 percent say that it is fairly important. There can be no question that for most people the family is more important than work. Under these conditions it comes as no surprise to find that Russians have a sense of communion with the family to just about the same degree (56 percent) as do the inhabitants, for example, of Germany, with 59 percent, or Poland, with 57 percent.<sup>1</sup> Moreover, the supreme value of the family among other values has been regularly recorded in the framework of various studies both in Russia [7; 8] and in other countries [9], and, as O. Zdravomyslova has pointed out, "in spite of the obviousness of the changes [i.e., in social life—Iu.L.] that have affected all of the countries of Europe without exception,

there is not a single one of them in which the family no longer has its primary importance. Not only that but among values such as work, family, friends, free time, politics, and religion, the family is rated the highest" [4].

The family as such is rated a bit higher by women. The *significance* of the family goes up with increasing age: the family is very important to 82 percent of Russians younger than twenty-two, to 88 percent of those between thirty-one and fifty, and to 93 percent of those over sixty. The latter are more likely to need support from family members. Interestingly, the importance of the family is somewhat higher among those who are relatively well off. For example, the family is very important to 82 percent of those in strata 1 to 3 and to 87–90 percent of those in strata 4 to 10.<sup>2</sup> The family may be less likely to be perceived as a burden in strata that are more well off. It is very important to 93 percent of those who think they have already created a happy family and to 78–80 percent of those who so far only wanted to create a family. Among those who rate their family relations as good, 92 percent report that family is very important to them, compared to 72 percent of those who rate their family relations as poor.

*Thus, for most people the family is an important institution. Any slight variation in the degree of importance is due, first and foremost, to the degree to which the respondents' own family life has been successful. Other factors such as sex, age, and standard of living, even though they influence ratings of importance, are of less significance.*

Only 2 percent of Russians say that *creating a happy family* has not been in their plans. A negative assessment of their chances is most often given by widowers (29 percent) and divorced people (38 percent). This may be because as a person grows older (divorced and widowed individuals tend to be older than those who have not married) it is more difficult to find someone to marry. Also, if past experience has not been successful, this tends to discourage new attempts. At the same time, the pessimism of 14 percent of those who have never married, those who are in a civil marriage or have a regular partner (almost half of them up to the age of thirty-one) gives rise to some apprehension. Among those who are married,

only 8 percent say that they would like to have a happy family but that this is not likely. On the whole, Russians are satisfied with relations in their families: more than half rate these relations as good, and only 6 percent rate them as poor. *People's assessment of the situation in the family does not depend on whether this refers to their own family or the parental family.*

*Thus, the family has not lost its value to Russians and remains an area in which it is worthwhile to make the effort to achieve success, but at the same time it is taking on new forms.* The formation of new forms of families and the modification of old forms, with the corresponding types of relations, represent a set of problems being discussed in the works of demographers and sociologists, including those in Russia (see works by A. Vishnevskii, S. Zakharov, S. Golod, T. Gurko, and others mentioned above). Setting aside the transformation of the forms of marriage, let us focus on the kinds of desirable and achievable relations of domination versus subordination in Russian families. What kind of family do today's Russians want?

The desire for three types of family is widely prevalent to about the same degree among the population of Russia: the *paternalistic* family, in which the oldest male should be the head of the family and make important decisions; the *pragmatic* family, in which the head of the family should be the member who is best able to find the right way in a situation and make decisions that are correct from the standpoint of the family's interests; and the *consensus* family, in which there is no need of a head; important decisions should be made jointly, while casual decisions should be made in accordance with the established assignment of duties. The *utilitarian* model, in which the head of the family should be the one who makes the biggest contribution to the family budget, is not popular. The paternalist model is most favored in villages and hamlets characterized by a traditional way of life, whereas in megalopolises, which are characterized by a high level of dynamism, the pragmatic model is the most widespread.

The desire for a particular type of family is different in the case of men and women: among women the most popular model is the consensus type (34 percent), whereas among men it is the

Table 1

**Desire for Type of Family Depending on Sex and Standard of Living (%)**

Family types	Strata 1–2		Strata 3–4		Strata 5–8		Strata 9–10	
	male	female	male	female	male	female	male	female
Paternalistic	39	23	35	22	34	21	28	16
Utilitarian	12	13	7	11	10	11	12	15
Pragmatic	18	21	28	33	29	34	28	41
Consensus	31	43	30	34	27	34	32	28

paternalist type (34 percent). We also find the same tendency in the case of those who are not married. This *discrepancy* (see [11]) does not predetermine the occurrence of conflicts in the marriage. After marrying, Russians of both sexes are most likely to say that the pragmatic model of the family is preferable, and are less likely to prefer the utilitarian model; they tend to modify their positions and move closer to agreement. Consequently, marriage brings adjustments to people's attitudes as to the preferred type of family; it reduces disharmony between men and women. When talking about age-phase characteristics of people's attitudes toward the assignment of roles in the family, only Russians older than fifty are most likely to say that the man ought to be the head of the family.

Requirements as to the type of family also depend on standard of living. In strata 1 and 2, the men manifest a desire for the paternalistic model of relations, probably owing to their need to feel that they are the "master of the situation," in order to compensate for their humble position in society on the basis of their place in the family. The women, on the other hand, tend favor the consensus type. This imbalance is reduced in strata 3 through 8, and in strata 9 and 10, the most well off, we find the lowest level of disagreement in regard to desires about family type, and the women feel most comfortable (see Table 1).

Interestingly, *the women's desire for a particular type of family is more likely to change in the direction of the pragmatic model as*

*they make the transition into better-off strata. In the same way, the men are less inclined to favor the paternalistic model. And so, in the well-off strata we see a more rapid development in the process by which men's and women's attitudes toward family type become more similar.*

In the case of both men and women, Russians up to the age of thirty show more disagreement about their desire for a preferred type of family, compared to older people. More than a third of young men in strata 1 and 2 (35 percent) favor the paternalistic model, whereas more than half the women prefer the consensus type. We find a somewhat lower level of disagreement among the young people of both sexes who belong to well-off strata. Among the young women in strata 9 and 10 there is a strong increase toward the utilitarian model; that is, that the family head ought to be the one who makes the biggest contribution to the family budget. This process was recorded by a research collective of the Institute of Sociology of the Russian Academy of Sciences in 2002 [12].

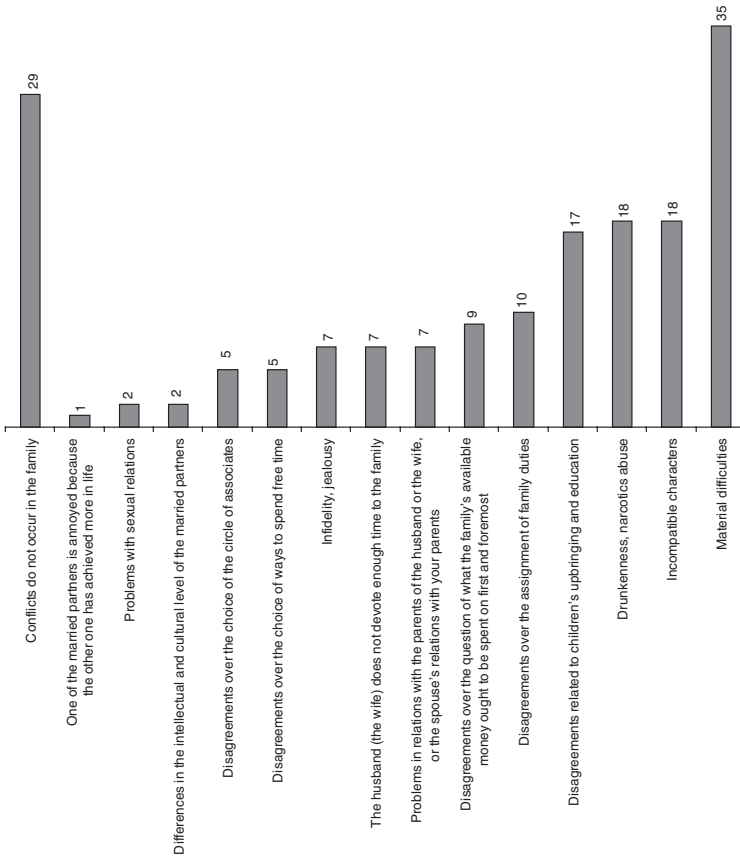
How is the management of family finances decided? It is basically the woman who handles the money for any kinds of expenditures in 33 percent of families, compared to men in 8 percent. In 22 percent of families the woman is responsible for taking care of current expenses, compared to the man in 3 percent, while major expenses are planned by the man and the woman together. Another 28 percent plan all spending together, and the use of their money is shared. A total of 6 percent have separate budgets, and each person spends what he or she earns. Thus, *in over half the cases the woman plays the key role in handling the family budget.* In the families that favor the paternalistic model, women take direct part in managing the finances; in one-third of the cases the woman does it on her own. In half the cases, those who prefer the utilitarian model turn over the right to spend the money to the woman. In families who believe that the head of the family should be the one who has a better grasp of the situation, the handling of money is either a joint activity or the woman's responsibility. On the other hand, those who favor the consensus model make the decisions relating to the family's expenditures together, and it is the only group in which the members' ideas as to the assignment of roles and actual behavior coincide to a considerable extent.

Thus, *the highest degree of agreement between the preference about the type of relations in the family and the way this is accomplished is seen in Russians who favor equal partnership.* On the whole, moreover, the data permit us to say that the transition from Russia's traditional paternalistic relations to the new forms of relations obviously reflects an ongoing process of transformation of relations within the family. In this sphere of social life, at the same time, we find pockets of localized revival of the preference for traditionalist attitudes.

The hierarchy within the family, reflected in part in the assignment of roles, can give rise to disagreements when the expectations of the married partners do not match. However, this is not the only cause of conflicts within the family. The study of the causes and the consequences of such conflicts has traditionally attracted the attention of researchers [13]. The most prevalent are conflicts over the division of labor [14]. There is a widely held view that "the determinant of a successful combination of the spheres of work and family, the kind of combination that does not lead to personal and interpersonal conflicts, is *not the sex-role orientation* but rather the little-studied *characteristics of the strategies of that combination*" [15, p. 71]. Even though when it comes to analyzing conflicts the array of problems connected to the division of labor in the family is more studied in the academic literature, there is also discussion, which is of timely relevance to Russia, of problems having to do with family conflicts in connection with infidelity, narcotics abuse, alcoholism, material difficulties, and so on [13].

Almost one-third of the respondents say that conflicts never occur in their families; 35 percent say that there are conflicts owing to material problems; 18 percent say that there are conflicts due to drunkenness and narcotics abuse; 17 percent attribute conflicts to incompatible characters, and another 17 percent report conflicts over the upbringing of the children. The other causes lead to conflicts in the families of not more than 10 percent of Russians, see Figure 1.

Foreign surveys that have singled out a similar array of causal factors in the study of conflicts in families have come up with a



**Figure 1. Causes of Conflicts in the Families of Russians (%)**



qualitatively different gradation with respect to their prevalence. For example, one American survey, which included among possible causes of conflicts the study of bad habits, interpersonal relations (e.g., with children from a previous marriage), the way to spend free time, material problems (both expenses and earnings), friends, work, family obligations, issues related to children, personality traits of the married partners (e.g., too talkative, too shy, a propensity to flirt), issues of intimacy, obligations with respect to each other and relations as a whole, characteristics of interaction (e.g., when one partner does not understand what the other one says) [17] found that the most common conflicts were about children, followed by household duties, issues of interaction, ways of spending leisure time, and, finally, work and money.<sup>3</sup> A number of foreign surveys have found that the family's poor material condition has an unfavorable influence [18]; a poor material situation has a destructive effect on family relations [19]; and poverty causes the marriage to be unstable [20].

According to our study, families in which conflicts come about due to drunkenness and narcotics abuse are characterized by the highest degree of pessimism in regard to the possibility of having a happy family some day. A similar effect comes from conflicts over real or suspected infidelities. Conflicts that arise because one of the married partners does not devote enough time to the family are not the cause of negative assessments as to the possibilities of creating a happy family. In all likelihood, Russians spend time on making a better life for their families, and their spouses appreciate that. It is also quite rare for the possibility of happiness to be thwarted by the existence of conflicts over the assignment of family duties, the choice of ways to spend free time and how to bring up children, as well as problems of relations with a spouse's parents.

Conflicts in Russian families can be grouped into seven types: conflicts of a cultural and personality character (disagreements about how to spend free time, the choice of the family's circle of associations, differences in the intellectual and cultural level of the married partners); conflicts due to problems in relations between the married couple (incompatible characters, infidelity and jealousy, problems with sexual relations); conflicts relating to the assignment

of roles (the priorities of financial expenditures, the assignment of duties); conflicts relating to insufficient attention being devoted to the family; conflicts that undermine the foundations of the family (material difficulties, drunkenness, narcotics abuse); conflicts over how to bring up the children; and conflicts due to external circumstances relating to the married partner (relations with the in-laws, achievement of more success by one of the partners).

In the families that have the best standard of living, there are more conflicts about cultural and personality as well as over children's upbringing. One reason for this may be that these people have more opportunities for a greater variety of ways to spend free time, as well as more resources to invest in the upbringing and education of their children. Conflicts due to material difficulties occur less frequently in these families.

The highest number of conflicts due to objective causes (especially in connection with material difficulties) is found in families that live in urban settlements and in villages: these conflicts are experienced by about half the inhabitants, a fact linked to the low standard of living in these population centers. In families that live in the megalopolises it is more likely that cultural and personality conflicts will arise; in families living in megalopolises and in oblast centers, the most conflicts generally have to do with the upbringing and education of the children. Very often, urban families consist of people from different social groups. In such families we are more likely to find situations in which the married partners are from different strata of the population, and this can hardly fail to have an adverse effect on their approach to the priorities of family life.

Not surprisingly, as the standard of living improves there is a linear rise in optimistic assessments in regard to success in creating a happy family, and also when it comes to assessments of current relations in the respondents' families (relations in the family are rated as good by 18 percent of those in stratum 1 and by 84 percent of those in stratum 10).

Very often, a family's level of material well-being depends on the dependency burden, and the composition of a household very often determines the risk of ending up in the low-income strata. In Russia only about one-quarter of the households are not burdened

by dependents: they do not include handicapped members, retired or unemployed people, minors, and so on. The most prevalent dependency burden is having minor children (41 percent of families have children) and retired people (30 percent). Moreover, the most critical dependency burden consists of retired people and handicapped people of group 1 and group 2 (families including dependents of this kind are more likely to have a low standard of living and less likely to be well off). The least-critical dependency load consists of unemployed people and minor children [21].

Our analysis of the types of conflicts in families shows that the most urgent are due to objective causes (material difficulties, alcoholism and narcotics abuse) and personality issues (incompatible characters, infidelity or jealousy, sexual problems)—in other words, traditional factors of conflicts that do not have anything to do with the transformation of social relations. This provides evidence, again, that *the second demographic transition in Russia is at its beginning stages, and is taking place in the most well-off strata.*

Against this background it is worthwhile to point out that the most prominent factor among processes of transformation in family relations is the one linked to the birth rate—that is, the decline in the birth rate as a whole and the temporary postponement of having children, as reported by Russian authors (S. Zakharov, O. Siniavskaja, and others). As a result, only 41 percent of the respondents report that they have minor children in their families. Those with the highest standard of living are having fewer children and having them later. Among Russians up to the age of thirty-one in strata 1 and 2, under one-third have minor children; in strata 3 and 4, less than half; in strata 5 through 8, about 40 percent; and in strata 9 and 10, only one out of five. Thus there is more *demographic growth in low-income strata and, to a smaller extent, medium-well-off strata.*

On the whole, plans to have another child are reported by 6 percent of Russians, 15 percent cannot respond definitely, and 3 percent have put off the decision owing to the economic situation. The other 76 percent do not plan to have a child in the next one or two years. At the same time, about one-third of young people find it difficult to say anything about their plans to have children, although

at that age that the question is most urgent. This means that *it is not so much that young Russians do not want to have children but that they are not very concerned about planning their own lives in the sphere that is so important to them.* This conclusion is corroborated by other surveys [22].

The peak of planning for the birth of a child is from twenty-six to thirty (17 percent of this group). Before the crisis, 29 percent of those in this age group had plans to have a child. It is most often the case that those ones who plan to have a child do not yet have any children. For example, 16 percent of those up to the age of thirty-one who do not have children are planning to have one; 34 percent do not know how things will turn out. Among Russians who do not have children and are between thirty-one and forty the percentage of those who plan to have a child is slightly higher—21 percent, since as people grow older they begin to feel the need to have a child even in the economic crisis.

Also of interest is that for Russia's young people, children not only serve as evidence of their strong and good relations but also as a way to improve bad relations. For example, among Russians up to the age of thirty-one whose relations in the family are good or satisfactory, 13 percent say that they plan to have a child in the next one or two years. Among those who rate relations in the family as poor, that indicator stands at 18 percent. Russians who are somewhat older, between thirty-one and forty, are more cautious about whether to have a child given poor relations in the family, but in this group as well there is still a tendency to compensate by having a child. This is disquieting, since this attitude increases the risk of augmenting the number of troubled families—not only incomplete families but also those in which the climate is simply not favorable, in which it is not possible to raise children who are physically and mentally healthy, because, as D. Coleman has written, “if the human capital of the parents is not supplemented by social capital as embodied in family relations, it does not play a big role in the educational level of the child, without regard to the amount of the human capital of the parents” [23, p. 132].

Even in the current crisis, having children is planned or contemplated by the strata of the population that are best off: one out

of every ten families plan to have children (this indicator is two times lower in strata 3 through 8, and five times lower in strata 1 and 2), a fact that was also recorded in the years before the crisis [24]. This is not surprising, since according to the data of other surveys, 75 percent of Russians single out financial and material problems among the causal factors that get in the way of realizing reproductive preferences [8].

The strategy for having children is also affected by the situation at work, involving the risk of losing income. For example, among those who say there is a high likelihood that they will lose their job in the next year, having a child is planned by only 4 percent, compared to 14 percent of those who rule out that possibility.

In addition to the economic consequences, the crisis has already inflicted a substantial demographic loss on our country and will continue to do so. If, moreover, we are talking about theoretical conclusions, it is reasonable to assert that even though in Russia we are seeing a *decline in the birth rate and the practice of postponing the fulfillment of the family's reproductive function in time, the practice of the deliberate planning of having children in the framework of the overall strategy of the development of the family is still in a rudimentary stage.*

Everyday life and concerns in Russia are also gradually changing in the sphere of family relations that is so vital to the population of the country. However, these processes are of a contradictory character, and even though a few of them provide evidence of an ongoing second demographic transition, other processes compel us to be more cautious when speaking of its success and benefits.

## Notes

1. The data from a 2003 survey of national identity in the framework of the International Social Survey Program.

2. For the purpose of singling out various groups in terms of standard of living, we used the method of singling out ten strata in accordance with the Standard of Living Index, developed by a task force of the Institute for Comprehensive Social Research, Russian Academy of Sciences. For more detail see [10].

3. It would not be right to compare this survey with the one described in the article for the 2009 data, owing to the characteristics of the former sample (a

longitudinal study of 100 married couples), the way the questions were formulated (questions were asked about conflicts in the family in the most recent fifteen days), and so on. Nonetheless, the qualitatively different ranking of priorities in these two surveys is instructive.

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