

Construction of Family Values in the Post-Soviet Space: Analysis of the Views of Experts on the Family Sphere

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Abstract— The objective of this paper is the construction analysis of family values. The analysis is mainly based on the comparative grid of Russia-Kazakhstan. The main goal of this study is to understand the social values and the distances of educators and social work experts with respect to interethnic, interfaith, and same-sex family forms. In addition, this paper presents the differences in the subcultures between different countries based on family values and social distances. The paper aims to address some key concerns in the transition of family values from Soviet to post-Soviet time including the extent of embedment of the modern social work with its system of professional values in the logic of Western modernist culture, the impact of fundamentalism on the formation of professional valuable settings, and the values and the social distances of experts of the system of social work towards the abovementioned nontypical family forms. The studies are carried out based on interviewing the social experts in Kazakhstan and Russia and the data are gathered based on the opinions of these experts on the non-conventional forms of families and family values before and after the Soviet Union.

Index Terms— the dynamics of family values, social distance, interethnic, interfaith marriages, post-Soviet time.

1 INTRODUCTION

THE formation of family values takes place under of the influence of transformation of internal and external policies of the former single Soviet Union zone. The comparative analysis is based on a debate about the family and family values in Russia-Kazakhstan. The urge to understand what field is used to construct conceptions of experts about the family and marriage (traditional or modern) led to the study presented in this paper. This certainly reflects in the professional activity of families and is translated in the society by the virtue of their profession. In the modern world there is a certain demand or trend for fundamentalism, which is often explained by "social fatigue" due to the progress of changes, reorganizations, or crises. It is worthwhile to understand in which framework, modernism, or tradition the family expert should think and act.

2 EVOLUTION OF SOCIAL PROTECTION SYSTEM IN THE POST-SOVIET SPACE

Since the 1990's, the system of social work with the family in the post-soviet foundation was based on the idea of social security. There were no experts in the states who could implement new approaches and work algorithms, but the official policy required new ideological orientations. The national social protection system countries such as Belarus, Kazakhstan, Azerbaijan, Kyrgyzstan, Moldova, Armenia, Tajikistan, Uzbekistan and Russia were formed in terms of choosing the type of social support and methods of state regulation of social problems. In all post-Soviet countries, the evolution of the social protection system can be characterized as a movement from the public-redistributive social and cultural model to liberal model. In the public-redistributive social and cultural model, some phenomena including family and marriage and behavioral forms were excluded from the field of social attention as inauthentic, whereas, in the liberal model this is characterized by the emergence of differentiated life and cultural

styles. In a nutshell, social work was formed in the logic of progress, modernization, and liberalization of values, but rather the logic of overtaking modernization. The emergence of the issues arising regarding the future path of the society development, brings about new challenges for the social experts as the post-Soviet countries such as Kazakhstan are approaching the era of national modernization.

Based on the fallibility of the extreme statements such as: "development must be carried out based on the western model" and "development must be exceptionally distinctive", in this study the emphasize is on the importance of the values of social work as: "humanity, justice, self-determination, privacy, anti-discrimination and honesty in professional activities" (P. Surrey 1996:60). These values are born as the consequence of the massive effort of progressive-minded social workers around the world. For individuals, who work in systems which involve human interactions, the presence of moral and ethical guidelines set by the key codes of professional social work ethics and social pedagogy is a necessity; i.e. they need to be ready to demonstrate a positive reaction to nontypical family forms or family values of the other coordinate system. It is not expected from an expert in the social field to have a negative attitude towards interethnic, interfaith, or asymmetrical-age marriages when interacting with the members of non-conventional families.

The study presented here, investigates the social distances (attitudes) of social and educational service experts towards to certain types of families and marriages. Moreover, it also investigates the social structures and the importance of correct orientation of experts in terms of political correctness, conventionality, and contemporaneity.

By comparing the valuable orientations of social workers in Russia and Kazakhstan the following research questions are investigated:

- How well modern social work with its system of professional values is embedded in the logic of Western modernist culture,

which requires tolerance of citizens and social institutions in relation to new and unfamiliar life style, readiness to live in a rather complex polystylistic environment;

- The impact of fundamentalism (in the form of movement towards the converted revival of the traditions) on the formation of professional valuable settings;

- The values and the social distances of experts of the system of social work towards interethnic, interfaith, and other non-typical families.

The comparative study of dominant values among experts is based on the Foucault's study of the history of sexuality, as well as, the E.Giddens' theory of the transformation of intimacy. In these studies tendencies of destruction of the traditional foundations of social institutions, changes in moral standards and the transition to new types of family functioning in the framework of polystylistic culture and a new gender order are investigated. The methods of gathering information include interviews with experts in Social Work (field of activity - work with the family), also with leaders of social divisions and centers, and with social educators in the Russian Federation (Saratov city) and the Republic of Kazakhstan (Uralsk city).

2.1 The dynamics of family values in Kazakhstan and Russia

Theoretically, it can be assumed that there are significant differences in the subcultures between different countries. Some societies have a longer history of sexual tolerance than others, and the changes that they are experiencing may not be so radical as some more open countries such as in the US, but these societies are also experiencing a change in the system of moral and sexual values (Godden's 2004: 41). The question which is worthwhile to investigate is: to what extent the new gender order and new family forms are acceptable in the social work of the former Soviet countries and the social distances towards ethnic and religious heterogeneity are expressed?

The analysis involves the identification of ideas about the dynamics of family values and the reference (the dominant construct) family in the minds of experts of the social sphere. In the latent analysis, it is tried to find the effect of the official discourse of social policy on the formation of attitudes of the family among the experts of social and educational fields, and to determine the tendency to fundamentalism, modernism, and liberalism by discussing family and family values.

2.2 The course and the method of sociological research

In this study, in-depth analysis was based on interviews with 10 experts working in the social field: 5 people from Kazakhstan and 5 people from Russia. Among them four people occupy leadership positions in the social services, and the rest are experts in social work and teachers of social sciences at schools.

Questions about family values and dynamics in Kazakhstan and Russia were accepted unambiguously and unanimously. All the informants believed that family values have changed significantly and changed mainly because of external transformations and macrosocial changes. Assessment of the nature

of the changes that have occurred could not be clearly determined, but the general mood of the informants suggests that modernization in the sense of assimilation of Western models and patterns was denied. In both countries, people talked about their own national values and traditions that should be revived in view of the realities of our time (in Kazakhstan) or the forgotten Soviet models of family and family education (in Russia). Russians gave more pessimistic assessments of the essence of change, considering change to be negative due to the crisis, the loss of intergenerational ties, the corrupting influence of the media, the dominance of computer games, and an increase in the number of divorces. Kazakh informants, building their arguments in the field of global social changes, preferred the logic of progress and modernization, the revival of integrity and development of society.

"Twenty years ago, our parents were growing like weeds, now everything is planned for children, parents began to pay more attention to the development of children and see them as a vessel in which it is necessary to invest continuously." (Head of Social Center in Kazakhstan).

"Family values have been changed for worse. The views on family became different, nowadays family no longer exists, since every member of the family tries to live isolated." (Social worker in Russian Federation).

By simulating the full image of socially prosperous families, the Russian informants talked about the combination of psycho-moral atmosphere in the family with material prosperity. It became unexpected that many Russian informants associate the category incomplete family with the notion of defective family. In the Russian context, the words are rhymed, by making it obviously unfavorable sign in the logic of the social construction of reality. Kazakh informants, referring to the successful social families, talked more about family microclimate.

"A trust is an indicator of successful family. Family cannot be considered as full-fledged family if people do not pay attention to children and to each other, and also there are families where one parent replaces all others." (Kazakhstani expert in social work).

While most informants are unanimous in saying that family success is not external, but internal, more Kazakhstani specialists believe that families cannot be considered as full-fledged where there is a strict hierarchy, patriarchy, tyranny, and where people do not feel protected in the family. Russian experts were more concerned by external factors, specifically material well-being, good education, and lack of social pathologies in the family.

In-depth analysis of social distances and social constructs of experts in social and pedagogical fields in two states showed that in some points the Kazakh informants were more liberal than the Russians. The family without official registration (in everyday slang - cohabitation) was accepted by loyal Kazakhstanis, though with reservations about the unacceptability of such union by traditional national culture, while many Russian informants spoke out against this form of family sharply and categorically, emphasizing the irresponsibility and infantilism of this form of marriage. Statements of Kazakh informants are best illustrated by the phrase:

"Cohabitation without registration is getting normal. Not to

say that I am 100% welcoming such things, but people can get to know each other and the disadvantage is the reduced sense of responsibility. About 10 years ago, it was possible to say that cohabitation is more advantageous for men, but now a woman also easily goes for such things, it is rather a step towards avoiding unnecessary liability. However traditional values have strong influence on it since in the eastern family the parents are unlikely to allow their children to live without registration" (Head of Social Services in Kazakhstan). Russians often express the following position: "Cohabitation is a "civil enemy"" (the Russian Federation, social worker).

The younger informants are more tolerant about this form of union and more willing to emphasize the fact that in a civil union people have the opportunity to find a partner and make an informed decision about their future life and joint posterity, as well as this form of union is a way not to make disappointed relatives, who spend "millions of tenge" to organize the wedding ceremony according to one informant.

2.3 Attitude of experts towards international marriages

Current research showed a picture of social distances in relation to interethnic and interfaith marriages. It turned out that the first one is perceived more loyal, while the latter is likely to hear the phrase: "Nowadays it is difficult" or "many difficulties with parents and relatives might occur and if couple overcomes all these drawbacks, then marriage and children raise under this condition would be happy", or "I used to take it fine, but realized over the years that it is better when couple is of one nationality". These phrases belong to Russian informants. In general, the social distance to intermarriage is not big, and sometimes it is minimal, the informants themselves hypothetically expressed willingness to enter into such marriage. Among the advantages of international marriage, Kazakhstan and Russian informants noted that such marriage is expanding horizons, people immerse in different cultures, they look at many things much broader and more erudite; it becomes a "supra-ethnic" union. Although, based on their reasoning, Russian informants expressed the opinion that, nevertheless, if interethnic marriage is about to happen, then it is better between people whose cultures are close.

None of the experts believe that international families had more problems than others; on the contrary, they believed that everything depends on people in the union and on mutual respect of family members. It is revealed that more traditionally educated people and those who honor external religious attributes are less open and loyal to interfaith and interethnic marriages, and more atheistic minded people are more open to international and mixed-faith marriages.

Despite the relatively positive attitude towards interethnic marriages, it is worth to note that in the post-Soviet era the number of nationally heterogeneous marriages decreased in Russia and Kazakhstan. Explanatory reasons are based on a discussion of general crisis of the family and family values, and in reflection on the interethnic tensions and conflicts in some regions of the former Soviet Union. Moreover, the powerful propaganda of the socialist period cannot be ignored, when interethnic marriage was declared as a way to strengthen the friendship between the nations. Although modern official political debate contains integrative concepts and calls

for interethnic partnerships, but not to the same extent and not the same context as it was before. Currently there is no ideological doctrine generally accepted in the field of interethnic relations in Kazakhstan and Russia.

3 DISCOURSE ANALYSIS OF THE VIEWS OF EXPERTS IN SOCIAL PEDAGOGICAL FIELD

According to sociologists who study international and interethnic marriages (A.A. Susokolov, Y.V. Bromley, L.M. Drobizheva) the proportion of interethnic alliances in the marriage structure depends on: the socio-political situation in the country and region, the economic stability, the state ideology, ethno-national composition of the population, historical background of people in that region, culture and lifestyle, religion, features of national psychology and many other factors. In this study, the effect of the first three factors were considered in the informants' debate about international alliances. After all, in a certain way, the informants are intermediaries between society and social policy of the state, and they clearly articulate or supported this policy. Mostly Kazakhstani experts made statements about the right to choose, the absence of rigid family patterns, cultural enrichment as a result of interethnic marriages. Russian experts did not object against it, but also, did not support such unions by appealing to the difficulties that might occur in such families due to social and cultural differences and differences in children upbringing. It seems that today the debates of global integration and global cooperation are inherent in Kazakhstan. Even if the interethnic and interfaith marriages are low or average on a scale of social distance and are generally accepted, the question of homosexual partnership has become a very different case.

Despite some efforts, the informants could not show loyal approval towards homosexual marriages, and among the Russian informants, there were no attempts at all. Kazakhstanis' social workers consider such marriages as a disease, while trying not to emphasize condemning and accusatorial position.

"Homosexual marriage - it's not their fault but it's their misfortune. Of course, I can think democratically that I do not see anything wrong with gay marriage. However, you can always ask a clarifying question: Do you want this for your child? Then, the whole theory collapses like a house of cards. Of course, no one wants this for their children. Probably, if it is happened so then as an educated person I would quietly get used to it. That's a very tricky question." (Kazakhstan, Director of Social Services).

It is worth to note that just few informants tried to maintain a professional image, recalling the Code of Ethics of the social worker. To some extent this study answers the question of what the actions of experts would be, and what role of professional competence and personal value systems would play in the selection of strategies for behavior and interaction with customers.

Asymmetric age marriages were described by one informant with mainly neutral logic, as in the following:

"I think in general in modern world it is not correct to set standards. Even the views that the world is changing penetrate in the most traditional society. If the wife is older than

her husband for 20 years - it means love." (Kazakhstan, the Director of Social Center).

"This could be love, and maybe payment or agreement there is no difference as long as they understand and complement each other." (Kazakhstani expert in social work).

4 CONCLUSION

The analysis showed that the higher the position of the informant in the hierarchical system, the more he/she tries to stick to the official rhetoric - the idea of tolerance, loyalty, multiculturalism, modernity.

The officially declared national norms are important factors in the formation structures and settings on fundamentalism and modernism in social work practice. The results suggest a greater degree of tolerance in the statements of Kazakh experts towards relatively free forms of marriage, ethnic and asymmetric age marriages, whereas Russian experts showed more normative and categorical attitudes. Based on a scale of fundamentalism to modernism, two states generally fall in the position of national modernization.

ACKNOWLEDGMENT

The work is supported by a grant issued by 2016 International Grant Program of Russian Institute for Advanced Study at Moscow State Pedagogical University.

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