ABSTRACT

THURSDAY, SEPTEMBER 26, 2014

SESSION II: FAMILY FORMS, STRUCTURE AND CONFIGURATIONS

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SOCIETY-PERSONAL SOCIAL NETWORK-INDIVIDUAL OR INDIVIDUAL-PERSONAL SOCIAL NETWORK-SOCIETY: WHOSE VALUES ARE IN PRIORITY IN FAMILY FORMATION PROCESS? CASE OF LITHUANIA

Keywords: family formation; marriage; cohabitation; social networks; social control

The theoretical framework

Positive control (poverty, wars, etc.) and preventive control (marriage postponement, conscious celibacy and childlessness, etc.), known in demographic theory (Malthus, 1798) are two sides of system of social parameters that regulate population growth. In pre-modern and early societies positive control usually was not needed because of developed preventive control. The preventive control ensured distribution of welfare among social groups in society. At the same time it pretended to “natural order” (Malthus, 1798; Lesthaeghe, 1980). While for ages family formation was related with goal of “successful partnership” meant as maximum utility and minimum loss (Becker, 1981). The strategies of family formation depended on the value of the inheritance of material and symbolic capitals, and the way by which the inheritance was transmitted to the descendants (Bourdieu, 1976). Consciously or unconsciously marriage was desirable between young people from the families with similar economic and symbolic capitals and statuses (Bourdieu, 1976). In each case family formation strategies (time of marriage, form of partnership and etc.) were selected based on amounts and set of capitals and statuses. Eventually, social norms and social control mechanisms were established to ensure the corresponding patterns of the family formation. It was expected that such “natural order” will guarantee a happy life not only to the couple and their families, but also to all members of the society. For such mechanism Wrigley (1978) suggested a term of unconscious rationality: to ensure maximum well-being for the individual in the long-term period society create strategies (rationality) which individual practices but not reflect consciously (unconsciousness). Unconscious rationality is functioning through moral codes which are integrated into traditions, religion practices and etc. Individuals and social groups
internalize and practice such codes in order to survive and procreate themselves. According to its content moral codes are similar to term of *habitus* suggested by Bourdieu (1998).

As a rule, unconscious rationality was mostly obeyed by individuals who respect moral values that are transmitted through generations, and individuals for whom interests of family and social status are more important than other needs, including inner motives (Lesthaeghe, 1980; Bourdieu, 1976). But matrimonial behaviour is related with biological age of person and time. Break of social norms and moral codes usually appeared when the age limit for family formation and procreation was reached but not sufficient resources or even not possible to access the necessary resources for family. Individuals who defy the natural order or unconscious rationality inevitably experienced social sanctions. In pre-modern and early modern European societies, generally, stigmatization or even social exclusion from the community was practiced. For separate cases when individual manage to overcome the barriers of “natural order” new symbolic codes were created (Lesthaeghe, 1980). In terms of Bourdieu, new habitus was created (1998).

Actually, matrimonial behaviour never exist as closed and unchanging. Particular social norm sometimes disappeared when lose its function in the social system. For example, the modern society gave more opportunities both to women and men to have a chance to provide for their own well-being and to protect their economic situation through active involvement in work and capital markets (Becker, 1981). As a consequence, the family loses the value of an indispensable economic shield. Moreover, in the second part of twentieth century developed Western countries reached such a level of prosperity that granted more rights and opportunities to each member of the society, independently of social origins (Dahrendorf, 1996, p. 165). Under such context, the individual liberates oneself from the family and the society’s dictate that keep the “natural order”. Among the new characteristics is the fact that the individuals from middle and higher social strata practice family models typical to the lower social strata in traditional societies: unregistered marriages, deliberate celibacy, other alternative partnership models (Becker 1981; Lesthaeghe, 1980; 1998; Lesthaeghe, Moors, 2000; Manting, 1994; etc.). As a consequence, matrimonial behaviour took on a new direction that is related with the need of self-expression and self-realization beyond the family, priority to working career and education, etc. So, within the historic perspective matrimonial behaviour of individuals dominated by family and society interests evolved to late modernity matrimonial behaviour coordinated with individual and social groups’ needs.

**The research hypotheses**

Family formation behavior in Lithuania mostly was studied focusing on macro-level analysis trends and factors (Maslauskaitė, 2012; 2009; Stankūnienė, 2006, etc.). While answer on questions are still lacking: How much opinion of parents, relatives, friends are important during selection of family formation pattern? Which factor make greater impact on matrimonial behaviour of individual – opinion or experience of members of the personal social network or other motives? How persons construct family formation process when they follow social norms and, in opposite, when neglect social norms? When social norms have greater impact – during first or later family formation process? Whether respect of social norms in family formation guarantees happy family life?

The aim of this paper is to examine links between socially constructed norms and social control and individual choices in family formation process. The research object is matrimonial behaviour of individual.

The main research hypothesis is as such: matrimonial behavior is determined not as much of inner motives as much dictate of social norms, internalized by individuals, and social control, first of all conducted by personal social network. Personal social network here is understood as constituted from parents, relatives, friends. Dictate of social norms here relate with opinions, experiences and example of members of personal social network.
The main hypothesis consists of three hypotheses: (1) opinions, experiences and examples are the references towards which individuals are oriented during the process of family formation. (2) Individuals who obey the dictate of the social network create the traditional family based on registered marriage. Meanwhile, those who neglect social norms are intended to choose alternative family formation models such as marriage postponement, cohabitation, divorce, etc. (3) The respect of social norms in family formation is guarantee a happy family life.

Data and the research methods


Descriptive statistical analysis (frequencies, means, $\chi^2$, t-test, Anova test), multivariate statistical analysis (correlation analysis, regression analysis, factor analysis) and event history analysis methods (survival (Kaplan-Meier) function and evaluation of survival function) applied.

Most important findings and conclusions

The research results confirmed the main hypothesis only partly. According to opinions of respondents, the main motive of family formation is inner need to create family in Lithuania. But the next motives are clearly oriented towards social network: example of parents’ family, parents’ opinion, then opinion of relatives and so on. Analysis also revealed, that population are divided into three main groups according to priority of motives in family formation: (1) those who voluntary and mostly are oriented towards social norms; unconscious rationality and respect of traditional moral codes are characteristic first of all to them; (2) those who oriented towards social norms because of pressure of social norms and material needs of survival; (3) those who form family first of all according to inner motives and less orientation on social dictate; only example of parents’ family have impact to them.

Evident impact of education on differentiation into these group was found: the higher education level the higher probability that persons depend to third group. That is, persons with higher education level have more freedom from social control in matrimonial behaviour. Level of education has an impact on partner choice and the development of family life. The higher the risk of divorce is for a couple where the partners at the beginning and end of the relationship have different levels of education. Family stability is mostly associated with the situation when people with the different levels of education eventually reach the same level of education.

Example of friends created their families make small but statistically significant impact on choice of family model: registered or non-registered marriage. Those who follow the example of their friends in family formation lived in family longer in comparison to others who didn’t take friends families into consideration. Most important impact friends make to those who create their families in younger age, and not so important impact in later age of person.

Illegitimate pregnancy as socially controlled behaviour is the stimulus to start a family in Lithuanian. In case of pregnancy beyond a wedlock family will be created earlier in comparison to other situations. This is especially true for the non-registered marriages. Moreover, families created because of illegitimate pregnancy survive considerably shorter in comparison to families created based on other motives.

Summing up could be state that matrimonial behaviour in today’s Lithuania is rather strongly associated with social norms and moral codes. Just people with different economic, social and symbolic capitals regard to them differently: consciously or unconsciously, voluntary or involuntary, completely or partly.

References


