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CHILDFREE AS A NEW PHENOMENON AND ITS INDIVIDUAL PSYCHOLOGICAL CORRELATES

Анотація. Феномен чайлдфрі, тобто свідомої відмови народжувати та виховувати дітей, набуває все більшого поширення як у світі в цілому, так і в Україні зокрема. Надається визначення явищу чайлдфрі та наводиться стисла

характеристика виникнення даного та пов'язаних з ним термінів. В якості можливих пояснень цього явища наведено результати демографічного, соціологічного та психологічного аналізу характеристик осіб-чайлдфрі поряд з розвіюванням основних стереотипів стосовно них. Показана виправданість відкидання дихотомії “батьківство - чайлдфрі” на користь підходу до розгляду рішення щодо небатьківства через квір-парадигму.

Ключові слова: сім'я, партнерство, батьківство, особистісні характеристики, травма.

Аннотация. Осознанное решение не рожать и не воспитывать детей, получившее название “чайлдфри”, становится все более распространенным явлением в мире. На основе анализа эмпирических и теоретических исследований приведены возможные объяснения принятия такого решения, развеяны некоторые мифы касательно характеристик людей-чайлдфри, описаны выделенные в литературе индивидуально-психологические характеристики. Чайлдфри-решение освещено не как противопоставление т. н. “осознанному родительству”, а как осознанный отказ от родительства вследствие понимания всей ответственности в связи с последним.

Ключевые слова: семья, партнерство, родительство, личностные характеристики, травма.

Problem identification. The discussions about childfree choice seem more anxious in nowadays Ukraine because of the huge decline in the country's population. According to the data, there used to be about 52 millions in early 1990s (the exact biggest figure is 51,87 millions in 1993), but in 2018 there were only 38,32 millions people living in Ukraine. Of course we should emphasize that these calculations were made, excluding temporarily occupied Crimea, ORDiLO and temporarily displaced persons, but as researcher O. Kramar thinks, we may suppose that there are 6,1 million Ukrainians living on those territories (Kramar, 2018).

We are used to thinking that in 1991 we had a low birth rate (1,78 children per woman), but in 2001 it was even lower – 1,08, rising a bit to 1,53 in 2012 and pulling down again to 1,37 in 2017. As O. Kramar testifies, the birthrate in the Ukrainian SSR by 1958-59 was 2,3 live births per woman (Kramar, 2018).

Certainly, such a decline is pretty expectable, as soon as Ukraine moved forward “economically advanced industrial or post-industrial societies with a high level of urbanization and the emancipation of women” (Kramar, 2018:14). As we can see in these tendencies, Ukrainians choose their reproductive strategy the way Europeans do. But can we have such findings in the question of voluntary childlessness?

As O. Strelnyk writes, according to the “Eurobarometer-2011” from 1% till 6% of EU's population aged from 18 to 40 (among them 7% of men and 5% of women) consider child-free family as an ideal variant of the family. In the USA the number of voluntary childlessness is approximately the same – 6,2% of population (Strelnyk, 2017).

On the contrast in Ukraine, according to the research “Family and Children”, conducted in 2008, we have only about 1,2% of people, agreed with the previous thesis. In the age group younger than 30 years this figure is higher – 1,5% and in

the age group older than 30 years it is twice as lower – only 0,7%. As we can see, voluntary childlessness seems more connected with the age, than with gender (Strelnyk, 2017).

It's interesting that a similar figure in Russia is only 0,2% of “confident voluntary childless people”, as Russian researcher A. Shadrina calls them, referring to the 2009 survey (Shadrina, 2017). In relevant research we find economic reasons to be prevalent in people's decision not to have children: “they motivate their wish not to have children, above all, with the lack of economic stability in the country, considering that the birth of a child is associated with financial difficulties, job loss, lack of career development, the additional costs associated with the formation and treatment of the child” (Bicharova, 2015:928). Anyway, the choice not to have children is often named the most remarkable change in the modern family during the last few decades (Clarke et al., 2018). And obviously, lots of investigation is made in order to find psychological background and correlates of so-called “non-parenting”.

The objective of this paper is to analyze the phenomenon of childfree and seek for its possible psychological and other grounds.

The fact that childfree phenomenon could appear is sometimes explained through the rise of pluralism of the XXth century when there appeared no universal truth, but a lot of individual truths, unique for every person (Bolshunova, 2018). The term “childfree” was coined by American feminists Sh. Radl and E. Peck who claimed that “childless” was used as a little bit insulting attribute. Childlessness, to their mind, was stigmatized and viewed as a sign of inferiority, impossibility to fulfil their main life task free from the meaning that some individuals simply do not wish to become parents (Levin, 2013; Bicharova, 2015; Harrington, 2019).

Meanwhile, parenthood is typically seen as a sign of growing into adult status, meaning childlessness contradicts a common notion of “normality” (Engwall, 2014). This may stand for the fact why childless women tend to be perceived as not fulfilled more often than men (Engwall, 2014). According to H. Peterson, the more gender-equal the country is, the less voluntary childlessness is disapproved of and the better women's choice in favour of professional career is taken (Peterson, 2018). Considering this, a growing number of scientists state that clinical theories of adult development, such as Erikson's, appear to be outdated and need to be extended to nonnormative variants of life development which may not include child rearing (Harrington, 2019).

In this light it seems important to differentiate between childfreeness and childlessness. The latter may happen due to infertility or some other reasons connected with the health of an individual, while the first stands for “early articulators” and means one's conscious decision not to have children. As research shows, there may be some middle version, “perpetual postponers”, with a person's delaying the decision to have a child that eventually gets impossible to realize (Blackstone & Stewart, 2012; Clarke et al., 2018; Miettinen, 2014).

Several researches carried out in the qualitative paradigm show that we should not view childlessness and parenthood as a simple dichotomy. Some parents, for instance, may have lost their baby or child due to miscarriage or death,

or they had estranged relationships with their biological children, or they may have had step children – and yet described themselves as childless. Meanwhile, there were other respondents who never raised their biological or adopted children but played some important role in the lives of their relatives' and friends' children and did not identify themselves as childless (Harrington, 2019). This proves that possibly childlessness should be decategorized and viewed within a queer framework.

Different macro-social forces (such as feminist movement of the 1970s, increased reproductive choice, increased access to education, and increased women's participation in labour) and micro-level motivations (such as freedom and autonomy) are mentioned as factors that stimulated the rise of the phenomenon (Blackstone & Stewart, 2012; Miettinen & Szalma, 2014). Current research shows that representatives of the childfree community are predominantly young people, highly-educated, professionally successful, less prone to religion and traditions, financially stable, and aware of threats and dangers of the modern society (Bolshunova, 2018; Miettinen & Szalma, 2014). What is remarkable, lower education, lower socioeconomic position or being in insecure employment status have been recently found to be negatively related to childbearing intentions, yet their role is not clear in proneness to childlessness (Miettinen & Szalma, 2014). This may serve as a proof for viewing child-bearing as a form of empowerment and gaining respectability in androcentric and ethnocentric cultures which is not needed for the childfree in societies more tolerant to diversity (Blackstone & Stewart, 2016; Harrington, 2019).

There are stereotypical expectations in the public consciousness that the decision not to have children is related to certain psychological trauma in the past or selfishness (Bicharova, 2015). Involuntarily childless women are seen as warmer than voluntarily childless women (Harrington, 2019). Early studies tended to show intentional being childfree as a form of deviance (Blackstone & Stewart, 2012). Meanwhile, several studies have shown bigger marital satisfaction in childfree couples, rare experiencing depression and generally higher rates of happiness (Blackstone & Greenleaf, 2015). Such individuals seem to focus their time and energy investing more into relationship with their partners. Remarkably, the 2016 "World Happiness Report" showed negative relationship between parenthood and life satisfaction throughout the world (Harrington, 2019). This does not mean that childfree patterns do not face questions of "what if?.." thinking of no one to carry on the family name, to leave an inheritance, to support in the senior age, and of a partner's to get inevitably ill or die (Pelton & Hertlein, 2011).

One more expectation is that the childfree do not like children. Parents are typically seen warmer than non-parents (Blackstone & Stewart, 2012). There is a fear that "the growing proportions of childless persons will pose extra challenges for future ageing generations, a significant minority of whom will have no adult children or grandchildren to assist them and take care of them" (Miettinen, 2014: 33). The reality is that the childfree not only like them but also aim to play significant roles in children's lives – as mentors, teachers or counselors (Blackstone, 2014). In qualitative interviews, for instance, childfree lesbians took

pains to stress that they do like children even without any prompt from the researcher (Clarke et al., 2018). And even if the childfree choose not to reproduce in a biological sense they still perform the social reproduction function of families (Blackstone & Greenleaf, 2015).

A specific case here is that related to unhappy experiences in previous relationships with partners and children which led individuals to the decision that potential benefits of parenthood were no higher than its costs (Blackstone & Stewart, 2016).

Childfree are also expected to be too much involved with professional activities, selfish, and materialistic (Blackstone & Stewart, 2012). Research shows that childfree women are more likely to stay single in pursuit of social and economic independence (Peterson, 2018). Meanwhile, A. Miettinen and I. Szalma state that individuals develop preferences regarding family or work at an early age, and those who are more work-oriented are more prone to choose childlessness (Miettinen & Szalma, 2014). Interestingly, fathers were found to have higher incomes than childfree men, and at the same time fatherhood was not found to have any effect on men's life satisfaction in the older years (Dykstra & Keizer, 2009). As for their selfishness, adults without children were found to be more actively involved in charity activities than their peers with children (Allbertini & Kohli, 2009).

Russian researcher A. Shadrina claims that “despite the fact that mother care is still an important goal for most of my contemporaries, motherhood is becoming a more and more expensive and not for all affordable “project”” (Shadrina, 2017:26). She emphasized that the image of motherhood in the mass media and in social consciousness has changed radically since the last half of the XXth century. It turned from respectful and grateful motherhood's treating to blaming, shaming, and demanding. And nowadays, it's even easier in the reality of social networks where anyone can show himself or herself as an expert in any question. Thus we can find some mothers writing about their experience in an emphasized sweet manner (“the mummy of two happy angels”), while other “experts” write about their “child's psychological traumas” and “toxic parents”. And both of the discourses meet their pleased audiences.

Comparing the two approaches, the author shows that relationships in the Soviet times were traditionally built around the concept of “emotional restraint”, while a new vision of appropriate parents-children relationships gravitates to culture of “emotionally involved parenting”. In the contrast of the first, the second one assumes that future parents should not only have a high level of psychological knowledge and skills, they should also prove their high level of personal maturity and all the kinds of well-being. Moreover, this demanding culture puts its blame not only on the nowadays parents, but also on their own parents, calling them pedagogically and psychologically illiterate. In the end it becomes even harder to be a parent, because one should not only become an ideal, super mother or father, but also reveal all the “evil” things that his or her parents “have done”, being “too thick and incompetent”, in order not “to prolong such “bad transgenerational experience”.

Despite the stigma, “the costs of being a mother a great – responsibility for child care, selflessness, being blamed when things go wrong, being subservient, restricted, and having to bask in others’ achievements rather than your own” (Clarke et al., 2018). Not to have children is a responsible choice instead of blindly following expectations (Blackstone, 2014).

In the result some young people, seeing themselves as victims of their parents’ “ill-treating”, decide not to leave kids with grandparents in order not “to spoil” them, others, in a more radical manner, decide that they are already “too spoiled and traumatized in their childhood to have the moral right to give birth for somebody”.

Thus, grown-ups able to bear and bring up children may decide not to. “Children deserve to be wanted and longed for, and consequently the absence of these feelings implies a childfree life. Both childfree men and women refer to missing biological urges” (Engwall, 2014:338).

Financial strains and difficulties in building career are also mentioned as a reason not to parent. Research has shown that childfree individuals tend to put stress on possible awaited troubles of becoming a parent including less time to oneself, breaks in career making, and worse opportunities for financing (Engwall, 2014).

One more reason to choose childfreeness that is mentioned in the relevant research is the risk of heredity (Engwall, 2014).

Finally, there have been detected some personality characteristics related to the decision not to parent. Introversiveness, sensitivity, anxiety, perfectionism, and impatience were found to compromise a person’s ability to parent. A desire for freedom, specified in one’s ability to be spontaneous, change jobs, and retire early, as well as a wish to avoid stress connected with daily routine that accompany raising a child were showed to be top motives to remain childfree (Pelton & Hertlein, 2011).

Conclusion. Even though childlessness may be viewed through the prism of economic and employment situation, there also seem to be certain individual and societal norms and values that stand for its grounds. It seems vital to challenge normative assumptions lying in the basement of childbearing decisions as doing this helps in creating “more inclusive, respectful, fluid, and nonpathologizing forms of engagement” (Harrington, 2019:26).

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FEATURES OF VICTIMITY MANIFESTATION OF PEOPLE SUFFERED FROM MOTOR VEHICLE THEFT

Анотація. Досліджено психологічні аспекти незаконного викрадення транспортного засобу як ситуацію втрати значущого предмету (автомобіль) та фактор віктимізації, учасника транспортного злочину. Наведено експериментальні результати від'ємного кореляційного зв'язку загального і соціального інтелекту та копінгових і когнітивно-емоційних стратегій поведінки, а також впливу даного зв'язку на посткримінальну віктимізацію особистості потерпілих водіїв. Автори доходять висновку про високий запит на психологічну підтримку постраждалих в транспортних злочинах.

Ключові слова: віктимна поведінка, соціальний інтелект, копінг, когнітивно-емоційні регулятивні стратегії, ситуація втрати (майна), кримінальна віктимізація, транспортні злочини.

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Childfree as a new phenomenon and its individual psychological correlates

Background. The number of childfree people and families around the world and in Ukraine in particular is growing steadily. The more economically and socially developed the country is, the higher the number of childfree people seems to be in it. Yet, there is restricted evidence about what makes people decide not to parent.

The **objective** of this paper is to analyze the phenomenon of childfree and seek for its possible psychological and other grounds.

The **method** of the paper is theoretical analysis.

Results. Major stereotypes about possible childhood trauma, dislike for children, basic low level of life satisfaction, high rudeness and selfishness of the childfree are analysed. Personality correlates of the childfree choice such as introversion, perfectionism, sensitivity and anxiety are listed.

Conclusions. The proposition not to view “parenting - childfree” as a dichotomy is made, referring to the childfree decision in a queer paradigm instead.

Keywords: family, partnership, parenting, personality characteristics, trauma.