

**ECCE 2018**  
**VII International Conference Early Childhood Care and**  
**Education**

**ASSUMPTIONS AS A BASIS FOR ATTITUDE FORMING TO**  
**MOTHER'S POSITION IN GIRLS**

Olga A. Karabanova (a), Olga V. Almazova (a)\*, Galina V. Burmenskaya (a), Elena I. Zakharova (a), Alexandra G. Dolgikh (a), Sergey V. Molchanov (a), Tatyana Yu. Sadovnikova (a)

\*Corresponding author

(a) Lomonosov Moscow State University, Faculty of Psychology, 125009, Mokhovaya st. 11/9, Moscow, Russia

***Abstract***

The article deals with the study of conditions and factors involved in forming an attitude to the mother's parental position in girls making the transition to adulthood. The article presents the results of an empirical study of the characteristics of personal world assumptions in girls with different types of attitude to motherhood during their transition to adulthood. The study involved 230 respondents aged 17 to 23 years. The results obtained allowed us to distinguish five types of attitude to the mother's parental position: 1) priority and acceptance of the maternal role; 2) a positive attitude towards motherhood and deferred parenthood; 3) motherhood as a duty; 4) an ambivalent attitude to motherhood and deferred parenthood; 5) rejection of motherhood and the maternal role. A comparative analysis of world assumptions in groups with a positive and negative attitude to motherhood made it possible to confirm the hypothesis about the relationship between the maternal position and the specific features of their world assumptions. The positive attitude to the maternal role is associated with the perception of the world as being benevolent and just, the negative attitude reflects the perception of the world as being hostile and unjust. The modality of the self-worth comes out as a significant factor that determines one's attitude to the mother's role. The positive attitude is associated with the positive self-worth and recognition of the self-worthiness while the negative attitude relates to the negative self-image.

© 2018 Published by Future Academy [www.FutureAcademy.org.UK](http://www.FutureAcademy.org.UK)

**Keywords:** Motherhood, parental position, an individual's world assumptions, type of attitude to motherhood.



## 1. Introduction

The topicality of research into conditions and factors that shape a mother's parental position is due to decreased birth rates, increased occurrence of "delayed parenthood" (giving birth to the first child at a later age), disharmonious family education, deviant motherhood, which has its extreme expression in abandoning a child right after its birth. The phenomenon of deviant motherhood increasingly perceived in our society to be a common phenomenon albeit not that widespread, calls for a social mandate to study the psychological factors of distorted «normative» maternal position, which implies the realization of love, acceptance of, and cares for, the child (Polivanova, 2015).

## 2. Problem Statement

Even in outwardly successful cases of motherhood and positive acceptance of the parental role one can come across its outright rejection. There is a clear tendency to move the birth dates of the first child to a more mature age, parenthood is increasingly becoming "late" due to the fact that career development is recognized as the main priority or because of a stable personal hedonistic orientation. The birth of the first child after the age of 35 has become quite common in our life.

Russia's birth rates statistics indicate the appearance of a similar trend in this country in the late 1990s (Zakharov, 2005). Avoiding the maternal role finds its extreme expression in deliberate rejection. The results of sociological surveys testify to the rejection of a parental role because a person is unwilling to limit one's personal freedom, abandon the existing way of life or to compromise a successful career (Rusanova, 2008; Engwall et al., 2010; Engwall, 2013). The results of the studies make us admit the fact that the attitude of modern young people to family values has changed dramatically. The system of value orientations shows a low prestige of motherhood and paternity and an increasingly frequent choice of childlessness by spouses (Akutina, 2010; Zakharova et al., 2002). There is a marked increase in seeking the values of personal autonomy, a high professional status and career, professional self-realization, an increased demand for material well-being and a high level of consumption, which proves to be an obstacle to a young person's choice of the parental role (Gritsay, 2011; Gorlenko, 2013). Thus, the study of conditions and factors that determine the formation of young girls' attitude to the maternal role assumes a particular relevance in modern society.

Since life and personal self-determination, including family self-determination and the shaping of attitudes towards the family gender roles of mother and father is a developmental challenge during transition to adulthood; we expect the personal factor to become decisive in determining attitudes towards the mother's position.

World assumptions constitute the most important personal construct that integrates unique personal experience. The term "assumptive world" was proposed by C. Parkes (1975) who defined it as "a strongly held set of assumptions about the world and the self which is confidently maintained and used as a means of recognizing, planning and acting" (Parkes, 1975, p. 132). The construct was subsequently detailed by Janoff-Bulman (1989) as a cognitive schema, which is developed and modified gradually according to a person's lived experience.

World assumptions form one of the determining personal constructs usually regarded as hierarchically organized cognitive-emotional implicit ideas in accordance with which the behavior and interpersonal relations of man are largely built. (Janoff-Bulman, 1985).

According to the concept of an individual's world assumptions by Janoff-Bulman (1985), in the course of his development man evolves an implicit system of ideas about the world. It includes two main blocks: the theory of the "self-worth" and the theory of the surrounding world, as well as notions about relations between the "self-worth" and the world. The following five world assumptions meet an individual's fundamental human needs and determine the implicit theory of the surrounding world. The positive pole of the implicit picture of the world can be described in the following way:

1) A belief in people's benevolence, friendliness and the safety of the surrounding world, the world as a whole is a good place for good people to live in, a human being is kind by nature and there is more good in the world than evil; people can be trusted;

2) A belief in the justice of the world around him, his "right" world order, where good and bad events are distributed among people according to the principle of justice, so that in the end every person gets what he deserves, decent and deserving people are rewarded in life while dishonest and indecent people are punished;

3) A belief in one's own worth, self-worth, that a person is worthy of respect and kindness; this is a positive image of the self when a person sees in oneself more merits than demerits and is confident that others around him think well of him, too;

4) A belief in good luck, in the turn of events in one's favor: people with a positive world outlook are more likely to consider themselves to be lucky, a person whom luck and fate favor; they are optimistic and do not accept the position of a victim;

5) A belief that an individual is the master of one's life, that the world follows certain laws and is controllable, that a person is in a position to control what happens to him, and while a chance event, though possible, is not of a decisive nature; a person can achieve his goals and prevent trouble and bad luck.

Overwhelming import and influence of world assumptions are because through their prism, a person not only perceives events of the surrounding world, but he accordingly forms a conscious part of his world outlook, builds his relationships and behavior in specific life situations. The underlying system of world assumptions has a special role to play when people are going through critical situations. By actualizing positive attitudes towards life, people, oneself, destiny, the ability to control the world we can get through the most difficult situations, loneliness and desperation without shattering our faith in the future and the meaningfulness of life by relying on the experience of humankind (Padun, 2003; Zhedunova, 2008).

Another important aspect of an individual's world assumptions is that they largely determine the image of the future, an individual's time perspective. At the same time, there is a close relationship between the positivity / negativity of the worldview and optimism / pessimism as an individual's general attitude. Adolescent girls and boys with a positive worldview look confidently into their future while a negative worldview often develops into skepticism, fear and negative prejudice towards future life, a lack of confidence in oneself, people and the world as a whole.

### 3. Research Questions

Our previous study revealed a relationship between the attitude towards motherhood and the parental position of young women and their experience of being accepted / rejected by their own mothers in their childhood and adolescence (Karabanova et al., 2017). The traumatic experience of rejection generates a high risk of negative attitude to the maternal role in adulthood. The experience of child-parent relations and the interaction between child and mother, the attachment type that defines working models as a cognitive-emotional construct determine the nature of an individual's attitude to people, communication and the self-worth. Since all of them form the basis of an individual's world picture and world assumptions, we have put forward an idea that the attitude to the maternal position in girls as they transition into adulthood will depend on the specifics of their main world assumptions. The general hypothesis broke down into two subtheories:

1. The positive attitude to the maternal role depends on the perception of the world as being benevolent and just, the negative one has to do with the perception of the world as being hostile and unjust.
2. The positive attitude to the maternal role is associated with a positive image and recognition of the self-worthiness of the self, the negative one stems from with the negative self-image.

### 4. Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study was to examine personality factors that determine the attitude to the mother's parental position in girls who are making the transition to adulthood. This age period expects young people to create life prospects as a hierarchy of life goals in the time perspective and to define the place and import of motherhood in their life.

*The objectives* of the study included 1) identifying the set types for the maternal position in girls during their passage into adulthood; 2) the study of a relation between an individual's basic beliefs and the specifics of her attitude to the mother's parental position.

### 5. Research Methods

#### 5.1. Sample

The study involved girls and young women from the age of 17 to 23 years ( $M = 19.5$  years), university students from Moscow and Kursk. The sample size is  $N = 230$ .

#### 5.2. Techniques

The sentence completion technique aimed to identify the types of attitudes toward the maternal position. It included 12 incomplete sentences relating to the following 4 scales: attitude to motherhood and the parental role; self-attitude "the self as a mother"; life plans related to motherhood and one's professional career; ideas about motherhood.

The method called the Basic Beliefs Scale (BBS) (Kalmykova et al., 2007) is a modification of Janoff-Bulman's World Assumptions Scale (WAS), 1989, aiming to identify the characteristics of an individual's worldview. The method consists of 37 statements, the degree of agreement with which is scored according to Likert's 6-point scale. Questions are subdivided into 5 groups (scales): 1) Benevolence of the World; 2) Justice of the World; 3) Self-worth; 4) Luck; 5) Controllability of the World.

For better understanding of what exactly the BBS questionnaire determines, we will describe the poles, i.e. respondents receiving low and high scores on the corresponding scales. The results are given in Table1.

**Table 01.** Description of the poles of the BBS questionnaire scales

Scale name	Negative pole	Positive pole
Benevolence of the World	Confidence in the world's malevolence and hostility. E.g., "People often betray, they are unfriendly and evil."	Belief that the world is full of the good, the belief that people can be trusted and they, if necessary, will come to your rescue.
Justice of the World	Belief in the injustice of the world: disbelief in the just organization of the world, success in life is distributed in a random way; the law of force rather than the law of truth rules the world.	Belief that fate favors only those who do good deeds. Belief in the just organization of the world as a whole.
Self-worth	Negative self-image: a low opinion of oneself, seeing only defects in oneself, confidence that others view him as being an uninteresting and unattractive person.	Positive self-image: a high opinion of oneself, including the belief that others see him as an interesting and attractive person, worthy of attention.
Luck	Belief in the impossibility of success. People with a negative world outlook tend to complain about their bad luck and the unsuccessful and unfavorable confluence of circumstances.	Belief that one is often lucky (both relatively and absolutely). And the belief that this will continue to be so.
Controllability of the World	Belief that events that occur in one's own life and in the world as a whole are uncontrollable. When being victimized people do not believe that it is within their own power and capability to achieve something with confidence and that they can protect themselves against ill luck.	Feeling of the controllability of the world. Confidence that things inevitably turn out to be good for them and will continue to be so. They will achieve the most favorable results and minimize failures.

Thus, the high scores on the world assumptions scales of the questionnaire relate to the predictability of events and people, the trustworthiness and goodness of people, the confidence and high self-worth and controllability and the safety of the world.

To process the data we used the SPSS 18.0 statistical software package.

## 6. Findings

### 6.1. Types of attitude towards the mother's parental position

Analysis of the results of the Sentence Completion methodology allowed us to distinguish five types of relationship to the parent position of the mother:

1. Priority and acceptance of the maternal role: 30% of the sample. Motherhood and the maternal role appeal to a respondent (positive emotional modality); a respondent makes plans related to the birth of a child in the near future, chooses motherhood rather than a professional career.

2. Positive attitude to motherhood and deferred parenthood - a moratorium on the maternal role: 24% of the respondents. Motherhood and the maternal role are attractive to a respondent (positive emotional modality); the respondent makes plans related to long-term childbirth believing that education and career development are a priority at this stage of life; the respondent considers it possible to combine motherhood and her professional career successfully.

3. Motherhood as a duty: 11% of the participants in the study. A positive emotional attitude to motherhood and the maternal role is combined with a dominant attitude to duty in the exercise of the mother's role due to the desire to follow the social set and obtain social approval (a good mother should ..., motherhood is heavy toil, ... and so forth). The choice between career and motherhood is variable allowing for a possibility of both a near and a distant prospect of motherhood.

4. An ambivalent attitude to motherhood and delayed parenthood: 22% of the sample. Motherhood and the maternal role are perceived in an ambivalent way: It is happiness, a miracle, but at the same time, it is hard work and great responsibility. The respondent makes long-term plans about childbirth, believes education and career to be the primary objective at this moment, and considers it problematic, albeit possible in principle, to combine maternity and a professional career.

5. Rejection of motherhood and maternal role: 13% of the respondents. An extremely negative attitude to motherhood and the maternal role. An open rejection of the mother's role and an unambiguous preference for a professional career (Karabanova et al., 2017).

**6.2. Personal basic beliefs as a factor in forming an attitude toward parenthood in girls making a transition to adulthood**

The correlation analysis of the data provides indicative results (Table 2, Spearman's correlation coefficient). It is possible to see positive correlations between scores on individual different basic beliefs, which can indicate that the idea of the surrounding world and the self-image is a holistic and inner construct in adulthood.

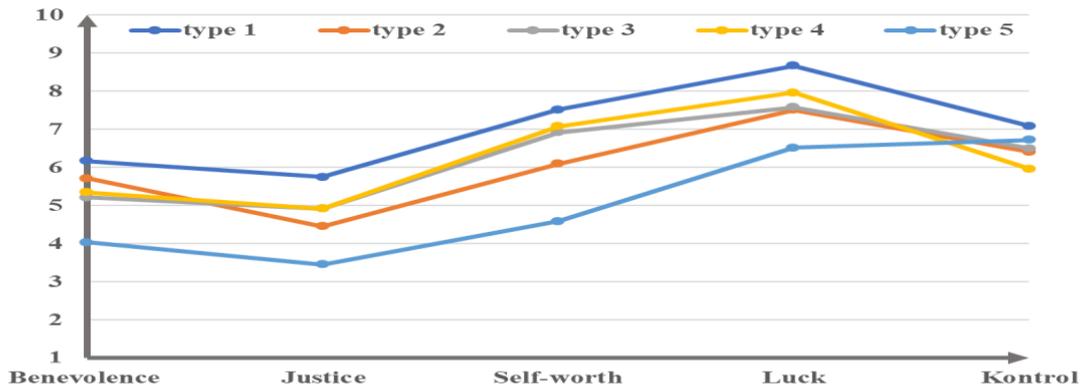
**Table 02.** Significant correlations between the scales of the survey to determine an individual's basic beliefs (BBS)

		BBS_1	BBS_2	BBS_3	BBS_4	BBS_5
Benevolence of the world (BBS_1)	r	1.000	0.454	0.265	0.317	0.209
	p	.	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.001
Justice of the world (BBS_2)	r		1.000	0.273	0.271	0.339
	p		.	.000	0.000	0.000
Self-worth (BBS_3)	r			1.000	0.363	0.340
	p			.	0.000	0.000
Luck (BBS_4)	r				1.000	0.320
	p				.	0.000
Controllability of the world (BBS_5)	r					1.000
	p					.

As for the hypothetical relationship between the nature of respondents' attitude to possible motherhood and an individual's basic beliefs the picture proved be as follows. The girls' priority attitude to motherhood combined with the highest positions on the scales of Benevolence of the World, Justice of

the World, Self-worth and Luck compared with other types of the maternal position. Whereas a group with a pronounced negative attitude to possible motherhood is found to have the lowest scores on individual basic beliefs on all of the above scales except for the belief in the controllability of the world. The two extreme groups do not differ significantly from each other in terms of confidence in life controllability and simultaneously they rank higher than the other three groups of respondents on this issue.

Figure 01 shows averaged profiles of individual basic beliefs in groups of girls with different types of attitude toward their own motherhood.



**Figure 01.** Averaged scores for individual basic beliefs in girls with different types of attitude to their own motherhood

The statistical analysis showed that the differences between the five groups of girls on the scores for all individual basic beliefs achieve a high level of significance according to the Kruskal-Wallis criterion (it varies from 0.001 to 0.037) (Table 3).

**Table 03.** Mean values and standard deviations between the scales of the basic beliefs questionnaire for different types of attitude to motherhood, the significance of the differences between them

	Type 1		Type 2		Type 3		Type 4		Type 5		Differences	
	Me	SD	K-W	p								
Benevolence	6.17	2.63	5.71	2.22	5.21	2.25	5.35	2.52	4.03	2.91	16.60	0.002
Justice	5.75	2.76	4.45	2.02	4.92	2.24	4.92	2.46	3.45	2.43	18.06	0.001
Self-worth	7.52	2.68	6.10	3.06	6.92	2.72	7.08	2.78	4.59	3.50	17.90	0.001
Luck	8.67	1.73	7.51	2.42	7.58	2.64	7.96	2.74	6.52	3.12	13.52	0.009
Control	7.09	1.77	6.41	1.94	6.50	2.21	5.96	2.11	6.72	2.85	10.19	0.037

This confirmed the hypothesis that the girls' attitude to the maternal position in the period of transition to adulthood depends on the specific features of their basic ideas about the world. A comparative analysis of the opposite sets in relation to the acceptance of the maternal role established that the acceptance and priority of the maternal role occurs where girls are confident of the benevolence and justice of the surrounding world and people and have a positive self-attitude, self-respect and self-acceptance. The lack of self-acceptance and confidence in oneself and surrounding people, the experience of the world's hostility, the notion of the domination and diktat of power, injustice lead them to reject the mother's position as one of taking responsibility for a child's well-being and development. The long-term research should further study the connection between the attachment type and the characteristics of child-parent relations, on the

one hand, and the basic ideas about the world for each of the selected types of attitude toward the mother's position, on the other.

## 7. Conclusion

There are five types of attitude to the mother's parental position based on the nature of the emotional attitude to motherhood and the parental role, self-attitude "My own self as a mother", life plans related to motherhood and a professional career and the idea of the motherhood in girls making a transition to adulthood. They are priority and acceptance of the maternal role, positive attitude towards motherhood and deferred parenthood, motherhood as a duty, ambivalent attitude to motherhood and deferred parenthood, rejection of motherhood and maternal role.

The attitude towards the maternal position in girls as they transition to adulthood is due to the peculiarities of basic world assumptions. The positive attitude towards the maternal role is associated with the perception of the world as being benevolent and just, while the negative one stems from the perception of the world as being hostile and unjust.

The positive attitude to the maternal role by girls as they transition to adulthood is associated with the positive self-image and recognition of self-worth while the negative attitude is due to a negative self-image.

## Acknowledgments

The study was supported by the Russian Foundation for Basic Research under the project 17-06-00825 «Personal and family factors in the formation of the mother's parental position in young woman making transition to adulthood»

## References

- Akutina, S.P. (2010). *Formation of family spiritual and moral values in high school students under the conditions of interaction of family and school*. Diss. doktora ped.n. Nizhnij Novgorod, 511. [in Russian].
- Engwall, K. (2013). Childfreeness, parenthood and adulthood. // *Scandinavian Journal of Disability Research*, <http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/15017419.2013.781955>.
- Engwall, K., Peterson, H. (2010). Frivillig barnlöshet: Barnfrihet i en nordisk context. Stockholm: Dialogos Förlag, 331–354.
- Gorlenko, V. P. (2013). *Semyevedeniye. Basics of parenthood: practical manual*. V.P. Gorlenko; M-vo obrazovaniya RB, Gomel'skij gos. un-t im. F. Skoriny. Gomel': GGU im. F. Skoriny. [in Russian].
- Gricaj, L.A. (2011). A social and psychological aspect of studying modern Russian parenthood. Psychology of effective parenthood: Materials of the international scientific and practical conference: *Kursk: KGMU*, 153-158. [in Russian].
- Janoff-Bulman, R. (1985). *The aftermath of victimisation: Rebuilding shattered assumption*. In C.R. Figley (Ed.) *Trauma and its wake*. N.Y., Brunner/Mazel, 15-35.
- Janoff-Bulman, R. (1989). Assumptive worlds and the stress of traumatic events: Applications of the schema construct. *Social Cognition*, 7(2),113-136.
- Kalmykova, E.S., Gagarina, M.A., Padun, M.A. (2007). The role of attachment type in the genesis and dynamics of addictive behavior). *Psychological journal*, 28, 107-114.
- Karabanova, OA, Burmenskaya, GV, Zakharova, EI, Almazova, OV, Dolgikh, AG, Molchanov, SV, Sadovnikova, T.Yu. (2017). Types of relationship to motherhood and the parental position in girls

- in the period of transition to adulthood. *Psychological research*, 10 (56), 9. <http://psystudy.ru> [in Russian].
- Padun, M.A. (2003). Features of basic beliefs in persons who survived traumatic stress: dis. . Cand. psychol. Sciences / M. A. Padun. - M. [in Russian].
- Parkes, C. M. (1975). What becomes of redundant world models? A contribution to the study of adaptation to change. *British Journal of Medical Psychology*, 48, 131-137.
- Polivanova, K.N. (2015). Modern parenthood as object of research. // *Psihologicheskaja nauka i obrazovanie psyedu.ru*, 7(2), 1-11. doi: 10.17759/psyedu.2015070301. [in Russian].
- Rusanova, N.E. (2008). New tendencies of birth rate in Russia. // *Narodonaselenie*, No 3, 152-161. (in Russian)
- Zaharov, S.V. (2005). Prospects of birth rate in Russia: second demographic transition. *Otechestvennye zapiski*, (3),39-40. [in Russian].
- Zakharova, E.I., Pechnikova, E.Yu., Filippova, G.G. Zakharova, Ye.I., Pechnikova, Ye.YU., Filippova, G.G. (2002). A new book about pregnancy and not just that. M .: Drofa. [in Russian].
- Zhedunova, L.G. (2008). Personality crisis and the image of the world). *Bulletin of the State University of Management*, 5, 6-11. [in Russian].