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PRESCHOOLERS' REPRESENTATIONS ABOUT THE
FAMILY AS A COMPONENT OF CHILDREN'S WORLD
PICTURE

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Abstract

With regard to preschooler's lack of knowledge of the world and their insufficient life experience, it is important for adults to understand what events become significant for children, how they interpret them and what is the content the children's world rest upon. The aim of this study is to analyze preschoolers' views on the family as a component of children's picture of the world. The analysis of children interview and parents questionnaire enables to draw the following conclusions:

- modern children focus on the traditional family model, in which they are its integral;
- most preschoolers perceive the status of "the child" as the central and most significant in the family, which point to the predominance of the child-centered model of the modern family;
- as children grow up, their talks and conversations with their parents diminish considerably. Reading books is superseded by watching cartoons without any further discussion;
- about 30% of parents of nuclear and single-parent families believe that it is not necessary to talk to the child at this young age on the following themes as "family", "marriage" and "love";
- in the course of forming the ideas of love, marriage and family, to a greater extent, they are influenced by the nature of the relationships between family members and the level of emotional well-being and involvement of the child in the family system, and to a lesser extent, by family composition and the child's gender.

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1. Introduction

At the present stage, the study of childhood becomes an interdisciplinary research field. The categorical framework of the modern paradigm of childhood is extended with the introduction of such concepts as "childhood space", "the world of childhood", "child-social environment", "children's subculture", etc. These concepts are actively used in the research field studying the conditions necessary for children's personality development in accordance with the specifics of their living space as well as overcoming a unilateral approach to realizing a mediating role of adults in the process of the social maturing of growing generation (Ivanova, 2007).

One of the ways to redefine the subject-object attitude towards childhood can be adults' comprehension of the peculiarities of the inner world of childhood and its uniqueness. They reveal most fully in children's subculture as a source of existence and development of the modern world of childhood. Transmitting specific ways of organizing children's life from generation to generation, norms and values of the world perception, communication and relationships with others, children's subculture includes a number of content components. One of them is children's picture of the world.

What is children's picture of the world?

The picture of the world is a system of images (notions) about the world and place of man in it, connections between them, people's life attitude engendered by them, their value orientations and principles of various spheres of life activities (Matsuk, 2004).

In psychology, the picture of the world is traditionally considered in the context of the meeting of a person and the world. Undoubtedly, it is characterized by a subjective attitude towards the world: the experience of being a part of the world, feeling of being satisfied or disappointed with its present state, emotional assessment of the world and its possible changes (Aksenova, 2000). In general, one can point out that the picture of the world formation is the result of an individual's acquisition of social and cultural experience.

Let us turn to understanding a preschool children's picture of the world uniqueness. The children's picture of the world is a special system of the worldview knowledge that includes a set of ideas and semantic relationships that cover the main aspects of the child's interaction with the world. Various aspects of the study of children's picture of the world are presented in the works of Abramenkova V.V., Aksenova Yu.A., Alieva T., Kudryavtseva V.T., Osorina M.V., Matsuk M.A. and others.

It's worth highlighting several important theoretical propositions determining the relevance and content logic of this research. In order to orient in this world, children invent a conditional system of coordinates, which helps them to gradually acquire the cultural diversity of the external world.

Therefore, it is very important for adults to understand what children choose from the outside world. What impressions and events become meaningful for them? How do they interpret them? And what is the content of children's picture of the world and the value-semantic scope of the child. Accordingly, the teacher ought to be able to use various forms of feedback to get an idea of the content and nature of relationship system as well as the child's worldview. One of these forms is the study of the child's ideas of various aspects of social life as the basic "knowledge" component of the emerging value system.

One of the basic values, the adoption of which forms at preschool age, is the family. Russian preschool pedagogy has traditionally paid a special attention to the issue of familiarizing preschool children

with the family as a complex and multifaceted phenomenon of social life within patriotic, moral and cognitive development. The problem of family values formation is highlighted in the works of Enik O.A., Elizarova A.N., Ivanova L.S., Kabakova M.P., Katrichenko V.M., Kuzina A.Yu., Kuzmina I.V. and others. In recent years the problem of familiarizing children with family values is represented in the works of Babunova E.S., Barinova T.M., Karataeva N.A., Kirienko S.D., Kupach T.Yu. and others (Kirienko, 1999).

At the present stage, taking into account children's age peculiarities, the aims, content, methods and forms of work have been defined, and methodical recommendations for parents have been developed. However, despite a sufficient number of works on family and family values, a number of negative trends is observed currently. According to the results of this study, more than 40% of the preschoolers under test have unclear and unformed representations about family and family values. About 25% of the senior preschool children cannot characterize the importance of family for a person. In many families, the interest to studying and preserving family customs and traditions is unstable, if at all.

There are several reasons for this. First, not every parent is fully aware of the relevance of the discussed problem and importance and necessity of the formation of preschool children ideas of family, marriage, and love. Many parents are not familiar with the methods and means of solving this problem.

Secondly, the context of a specially organized pre-school educational process is aimed at developing the interest to family values and traditions in preschool children. Teachers do not always manage to form adequate ideas of family, since they do not take into account the peculiarities of the situation in the family and experience of the child's living in the family relations system. And, consequently, they do not effectively realize the technology of individualization and personalization of the educational process.

Therefore, the organization of purposeful interaction between the subjects of upbringing and educational process in preschool establishments is of great importance because it forms children's ideas of family and family traditions. Priority goal of a pre-school educational establishment is the actualization of the child's sense of belonging to the family and initiation of children's awareness of family values and traditions. It is based on studying the child's life experience and taking into account the content of the child's knowledge and value judgments about the concepts that determine family values.

2. Problem Statement

The study of children's picture of the world, in particular, children's ideas of family, marriage and love, will contribute to the following:

- adults' (parents and teachers) understanding of the specifics of preschoolers perception of family as a phenomenon of social life and their attitude toward various aspects of family life;
- the clarification of aims and forms of teachers' work with pupils and their parents to familiarize children with family values, taking into account the specific educational situation that develops the nature of spontaneously formed views of the child about the family in different family types, with regard to the child's age and gender.

3. Research Questions

Do preschoolers' ideas of family, marriage and love depend on family composition, children's age and gender? What are parents' attitudes to familiarizing preschool children with family values?

4. Purpose of the Study

The aim of this study is to analyze preschoolers' views on the family as a component of children's picture of the world and to determine the family factors that influence the formation of ideas of family and family values.

Based on the aim, the following research objectives are formulated:

- the identification of the features of preschool children's ideas of love, marriage and family, depending on their age, gender and family composition;
- the study of parents' views on the necessity to communicate with children on the themes of "love", "marriage" and "family."

5. Research Methods

The empirical base of the study was Kindergarten №59 in Cherepovets. The study was conducted in younger and older preschool groups in September, 2016. The respondents were children aged 4 and 7 years old. 63 children participated in the study: 32 girls and 31 boys. 35 families were nuclear families, and 28 were single-parent.

Methods of research: interviewing of preschool children, the project method "Kinetic picture of the family", questioning of parents.

6. Findings

6.1. Results of children interviewing

To the question "How can you tell that people love each other?", the children answered: "They hold hands and smile", "They do not quarrel", "They kiss and hug", "They give each other gifts", "It's when you feel something in your heart", "When there are many children in the family", "Mom loves Dad because he doesn't drink beer or smoke", "When they have everything they need and everyone is friendly. When no one is beaten".

The majority of the children (84%) distinguished in the notion of "love" not only emotional component ("When people love each other, it means, they don't offend each other", "They kiss all the time"), but also some activity ("They take care of each other", "They walk together, give flowers"). 46% of the children closely interrelated the concepts of love and marriage: "Love is when people marry and give birth to children", "Love is when people fall in love with each other and get married." As the reasons for getting married, the children gave the following:

3% of the children did not differentiate the motivations: "When they have a kind heart", "Because they like to marry". 40% of the children considered a birth of a child to be the main thing; 49% of the children saw the family as a means to avoid loneliness and the desire to live with a person who you liked: "Not to be alone", "Not to part", "Not to get lost from each other", "To be together", "Because my mother has found a good dad". Only 8% of the children defines the family as something to benefit from: "Not to go to the army", "To get money from a husband", "Not to cook, let a wife cook".

Answering the question: "What is a family?", the children gave the following answers: "It's like in a movie", "It's when people make friends, and they live well", "When they fell in love, when they become friends, and the wedding begins, and they kiss each other," "When everyone loves each other."

Defining the concept of "family", the children used such characteristics as mutual assistance, friendship, love, living together. In general, preschoolers defined the family as "when a mother, a father and a child live together amicably, love and help each other". 80% of the children believed that a person could not live without a family; all the interviewed children, without any exception, wanted to have a family and children in the future. 30% of the preschoolers wanted to have many children.

The question "What is family for? Why should you start a family?" the answers were the following: "So that people do not starve", "So that they do not get bored", "When they give birth to children, they should stay at home, they should take care of them", "To love each other", "When all love father, mother, grandfather", "To feed children".

The analysis of the children's answers to the question "What are children in the family for?" made it possible to define the following motivations. In the first place (68%) there was motivation connected with meeting emotional needs of parents: "For fun", "Not to get bored", "To make parents happy", "To make mom happy". In the second place - social motivation and procreation (27% of the children): "To grow up and get married", "So that there will be many people", "To give birth to children", "To grow up and work", "To help elderly people." And the third motivation (5% of children) is connected with social stereotypes, i.e. "To be like everyone else," "To have a nuclear family".

The comparative analysis of the answers of the children attending younger and older pre-school groups made it possible to distinguish the following: in the older pre-school group, the children were better oriented in terms of "family", "marriage" and "love", they gave more detailed answers, based on such family values as respect, responsibility and care. In the older pre-school group, 65% of the children related these concepts, but as for the younger pre-school group, only 4% of the children saw any connection between them. Thus, the views of the older preschool children on love, marriage and the family were more meaningful and interrelated than those of the younger pre-school group children, and were based on basic family values.

Analyzing the results of the children interviewing by means of family composition (nuclear or single parent family), we found out that 58% of the children from single parent families and 55% of the children from nuclear families had nearly the same ideas of love, marriage and family; the revealed differences were insignificant except for one characteristic: children from single-parent families had a more detailed idea of what kind of family they would like to have in the future. The remaining children (42% of children from single-parent families and 45% of children from nuclear families) were strongly influenced by the nature of relationship between family members, the level of emotional well-being and involvement in the family relations system, but not by family composition. This fact was also confirmed by the interpretation of children's drawings.

Analyzing the results of children interviewing by gender principle, we found out that a half of the boys (55%) and girls (56%) had almost the same ideas of love, marriage and family, although there was a number of differences in the understanding of certain concepts. The boys' answers (62%) about "love" ("What is love?", "How can you tell that people love each other?") were less detailed and almost monosyllabic. The boys, unlike the girls, had a better understanding of their future marital companion, and eagerly described her.

6.2. Results of parents questionnaire

The content orientation of the questions offered to the parents was of the systematic and informative nature, also relating to frequency of parents' conversations with the children when they introduce them to the concepts "family", "marriage", "love".

The parents' responses were analyzed depending on the child's age and gender as well as family composition (Table 01).

Table 01. Parents' responses depending on the child's age, gender and family composition

| Questions | Responses of the parents depending on the age of the children | | Responses of the parents depending on family type | | Responses of the parents depending on the gender of the children | |
|--|---|---------------------------------------|---|---------------------------------------|--|-----------------|
| | % early pre-school age children's parents | % older pre-school children's parents | % parents from nuclear families | % parents from single-parent families | % girls' parents | % boys' parents |
| | Answer variant «yes» | | | | | |
| Do you read books about family, marriage, love? | 61 % | 28 % | 44 % | 50 % | 52 % | 38 % |
| Do you discuss with your child what you have read? | 57 % | 40 % | 50 % | 45 % | 52 % | 45 % |
| Do you watch cartoons on these themes? | 72 % | 65 % | 69 % | 68 % | 62 % | 75 % |
| Do you discuss with your child the cartoons you have watched? | 65 % | 60 % | 67 % | 50- % | 60 % | 66 % |
| | Answer variant «often talk » | | | | | |
| How often do you talk with your child about family, marriage, love? | 72 % | 53 % | 69 % | 45 % | 50 % | 75 % |
| | Answer variant «talk eagerly» | | | | | |
| If you talk, then how does the child perceive these conversations? | 80 % | 68 % | 73 % | 77 % | 55 % | 93 % |
| | Answer variant «yes» | | | | | |
| Do you think it's worth talking to a child at that age on the themes of love, marriage and family? | 76 % | 63 % | 72 % | 64 % | 71 % | 68 % |

7. Conclusion

Summarizing and analyzing the results of interviewing the different-age group children, we can draw the following conclusions:

- the 4 and 7 year-old children give the most detailed answers when describing the concept "family".

The children of the pre-school group demonstrate emotional and activity characteristics of the concept

"love" in their answers. 65% of the older preschool-age children find a connection between the concepts of "family", "marriage" and "love", unlike the children of younger preschool age - only 4%;

- 58% of the children from single-parent families have almost the same (with a slight difference), ideas of love, marriage and family with the children from nuclear families. But the children from single-parent families have a more detailed idea of what kind of family they would like to have in the future. The modern children focus on a traditional model of the family: it is a happy family, always with children. Most of the preschoolers perceive the status of "the child" as a central and most significant in the family. On the one hand, it is encouraging that children connect the concepts of "family" with "the child" and realize the need to continue their bloodline. On the other hand, one cannot but be alarmed by the fact that a modern child takes a central position in the family for granted, which corresponds to the socially created child-centred model of a modern family. Therefore, adults (teachers and parents) need to expand the views of older preschool children on the multidimensionality of social roles performed by each member of the family;

- the emerging ideas of love, marriage and family undergo more influence by the nature of the relationship between family members, level of emotional well-being and child's inclusion in the family system, but not by the child's gender and family composition. These trends should be taken into account by both teachers and parents when correcting the child's life experience, acquired knowledge and formed value judgments related to family values.

General results of the parents interviewing are as follows:

- as children grow up, their talks and conversations with their parents diminish considerably. Reading books is superseded by watching cartoons without further discussion;

- girls are more likely than boys to read on the themes "family", "marriage" and "love" and discuss what they have read;

- about 30% of parents of nuclear and single parent families believe that it is not necessary to talk with the child at this young age on the following themes as "family", "marriage" and "love".

Therefore, parents need the following:

- teachers' purposeful guidance to support motivation and increase their participation in the formation of their children's ideas on family and family values,

- the educational assistance in expanding the forms and ways of communicating with their children on these topics.

The study has been carried out within the framework of the innovative project "Ensuring Social Growth of Preschool Children in the Process of Their Inclusion in Children's Subculture." The research findings have been used by teachers in the process of forming preschoolers' ideas of family values as well as methodical materials that help parents to understand and accept the features of the children's picture of the world (Ivanova, 2016).

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