

SOCIOLOGY

legalization of same sex-sex relations and transformations in the social institute of family

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Abstract. The legalization of same-sex relations has generated many discussions in nowadays world and one of them is the discussion about influence of same-sex relations on the social institute of family. The study showed that same-sex relations have the impact on some transformations, such as changing of value system, new forms of family, obsolesces of the concept “family life cycle”, changing of gender roles and meaningful part of the institute functions, but this impact is not always defining and takes place along with other internal and external factors.

Keywords: *Family institution, modern family transformations, same-sex relations, marriage, homosexuality.*

Why is it important to study?

Last decades the tendency to be tolerant to different opinions and preferences has strengthened in developed countries. This tendency did not avoid same-sex relations. Nowadays fewer people there perceive homosexuality as something unnatural and abnormal. In many Western countries homosexuals have received almost all the rights they need for self-affirmation.

But every great change has its proponents and opponents. Some people accuse LGBT-community of the crisis of the social institution of family; others perceive all transformations as normal and logical. Often such allegations are made arbitrarily – the impact of same-sex relations on the family institution is recognized a priori. But never before there have been researches connected with the impact of same-sex relations on the institution as a whole, only on the particular spheres like family values or raise of children. Relatively to such problem we cannot make conclusions without real data. Family as one of the first social institutions demands high attention and right understanding of what is happen with it and what can expect further. In such perspective question about real existence and content of same-sex relations impact on institution of family and its transformations has become actual.

We emphasize that research is refer mostly to so-called developed countries as there we can deeper analyze the impact because of historical realities.

Family institute transformations

Family as a social institute is a socio-biological subsystem of society, which ensures the reproduction of community members [1]. Family institution has been changed trough all human history as values and norms of society has changed. During the period of modernization and beginning of postmodernity first places were occupied by such values as individualism, hedonism, consumerism. Individual interests became determining, professional and personal self-realization became one of the most important goals in the first 25-30 years of life [2; 3].

For example, in European society values top-three were hold by Health, Love and Work. To 2012 difference between Love and Work becomes 1%, in contrast with 2008, when it were 7%¹ [4].

Classical definition of family now is definition of Entony Giddens: “Family is a group of persons directly linked by kin connections, the adult members of which assume responsibility for caring for children”. The most common type of family is nuclear family which consists of parents and their biological children [5]. Some scientists think, that nowadays more relevant becomes definition of Nail Smelser, who divides families into standard and nonstandard. Standard family contains two or more people who are connected with each other by blood, marriage or adoption. Nonstandard family consists of two or more people of any sex, who are not relatives, and people who live alone [6].

Based on theory of Neil Smelser, data of sociological surveys, data of official censuses, statistics bureaus and materials of Eurostat we allocate such modern transformation of the family institution:

1) possibility to choose and re-choose the partner [3], prevailing of “pure relations”, when people are together until mutual emotional satisfaction, openness and trust to each other are kept [5];

2) development of new and nonstandard forms of family and marriage such as childless families; single parent families; homosexual families; adoptive families; stepfamily families; families where biological and social mother are different people; group marriage; serial monogamy etc. [7; 8]. For example in 2014 in USA there were 12 million single parents who raised 17.4 million children under the age of 18 [9]. In Germany 62.9% unmarried couples live separately [10]. What about cohabitation, such form of relations is followed by 12.4% people over 20 in Canada² [11], ¼ of couples in France and Sweden³ [12];

¹“Standard” Eurobarometer. Research was hold 12-27.05.2012. Included 32,728 respondents over 15 years from 27 European country. Survey was conducted by interview method.

²State statistics bureau of Canada General social research 2011. There were 22,435 respondents over 15 from 10 Canadian provinces. [<http://www23.statcan.gc.ca/imdb/p2SV.pl?Function=getSurvey&SDDS=4501&lang=en&db=imdb&adm=8&dis=2>]

³Materials of census of EU countries [<http://www.oecd.org/social/family/>].

3) formation of carrier as priority to family among young generation and so – late marriage and bear children [6]. For example, in the USA, according to the data 2012, 1 of 5 adults over 25 has never been married, comparing with 1960 when this indicator was 1 to 10⁴ [13]. The level of fertility is 2.1 in the USA and a little lower in Europe, which is normal, but not enough to complete reproduction of society [12];

4) partly performing the functions of institute by individual and government, change of meaning of functions. For example, reproductive function stop to be such meaningful as we see the raise of popularity of adoption and childfree movement, the socialization function mostly take special structures (nurseries, kindergartens, baby-sitters) and so on [6];

5) changing gender roles, equal distribution of family and labor responsibilities [6]. For example, in 1970 in the USA were 53% of working mothers and in 2012 their number attained 71%. Moreover, to 2011 women began to spend more time on work then on home and children, although in percentage men spend more time on work anyway⁵ [14]. In Australia women comprise 46% of all employees⁶ [15], as well as in the USA⁷ [16] and European Union⁸ [17];

6) occurrence of definition “family life way”, which does not imply family creation as new cell of society and it existence until the death of one spouse [18].

Homosexuality in family institution

References to homosexuality and same-sex relations can be found even in Ancient times, but they have started to become legal only in second part of XX century, when American Psychology Association struck out homosexuality from the list of diseases in 1973. In 1992 The World Health Organization did that [19]. Two years later Cairo international UN conference about population and development was held, and one of the principles of approved Program affirm equality and equivalence of different types of sexual unions in including homosexual [20].

During 1980-90ies many European countries enacted laws which allowed same-sex couples to live in unregistered cohabitation or registered partnership. In 2001 the Netherlands was the first country to legalize same-sex marriages. Now same-sex marriages are legalized in 21 countries and in some on regional level. In all those countries same-sex couples who registered their union can adopt children [21]. Same-sex relationship gradually fixed as one of the structures of family institute, the number of same-sex cohabiting, married or bearing children couples raises every year. But has it affected the family institution?

It can be said that the liberalization of perceiving homosexual relationship influenced the institute system of values and norms. Heterosexual relationship lost their value as same-sex relationship was equated to them. This led to changes in norms, which were kept invariable several hundred years, and so started to change family structure, gender roles, family functions. We will consider each of them to define impact and to understand its content.

Same-sex relationship entered the institute of family as a new form of family – homosexual family. It has brought the usual understanding of family as nuclear with parents of different sex and their biological children. Other forms of family can be both homosexual and heterosexual, and most of them appear before same-sex family. For example, in GB in 2014 there were 84th same-sex cohabiting families and 2.975 mil heterosexual⁹ [22].

Big amount of marriages with frequent divorces is a modern phenomenon that was caused by changes in traditional view of relationship. This transformation has the impact on the institute because it creates and disintegrates not only a legal union, but also a family. Most people still think that real family consists of spouses and their children (99% of Americans) or just of married couple (88% of Americans)¹⁰ [14]. Legalization of same-sex relationship did not have an impact on these changes. In Norway quantity of marriages now is approximately 23-25th a year. The quantity of divorces is 10-11th a year. Since 2009 same-sex unions were included in statistic, but situation did not change¹¹ [23]. In Denmark as of 2012 on average among registered same-sex marriages disintegrated 17%, while heterosexual – 49% [24]. Sudden changes in quantity of marriages and divorces were caused by external reasons more probably than internal. Also now homosexuals highly value marriage as they got right to marry not so long time ago, but in the future it can stop to have such a symbolic meaning.

Also legalization of same-sex relations has no impact on increasing age of marrying and bearing children. This process was mostly caused by opinion in modern Europe that person should firstly get an education and find a job, fortify social and economic position, and then think about family and children.

Homosexual relationship played one of the key roles in changing understanding of family life cycle. “Normative” life cycle includes steps that have to pass each family. But homosexual couples cannot pass some of them. Marriages and adoption of children are allowed in very few countries. So legalization of homosexual relationship became a final step in transition to “family life way”.

⁴Pew Research Center. Data was taken from research of United States Census Bureau.

⁵Pew Research Center, research was conducted 1-21.10.2010, included 2,691 respondents over 18 shared into 3 groups: 1) single parents (divorced or diverged) with at least one child under 18; 2) living with partner and child under 18; 3) never been married and now living without partner, bearing a child under 18.

⁶Labor force, Australia, Jul 2015 [http://www.abs.gov.au/ausstats/abs@.nsf/mf/6202.0/]

⁷U.S. Labor force.

⁸Each quarter some 1.8 million interviews are conducted throughout the participating countries to obtain statistical information for some 100 variables. The sampling rates in the various countries vary between 0.2 % and 3.3 %.

⁹Labor Force Survey (research center in International organization of labor) from materials of GB government census [www.ons.gov.uk.].

¹⁰Pew Research Center, research was conducted 1-21.10.2010, included 2,691 respondents over 18 shared into 3 groups: 1) single parents (divorced or diverged) with at least one child under 18; 2) living with partner and child under 18; 3) never been married and now living without partner, bearing a child under 18.

¹¹Central Statistics Bureau of Norway.

The impact of homosexual relationship on gender roles is controversial. On the one hand, the struggle for gender equality began in the middle of XIX century, and the realization of this goal has begun in the middle of XX century. Also partners in same-sex relations perform different gender roles as often one partner is stronger and more independent, and another is more sensitive and soft [25]. On the other hand, partners in homosexual relations can exchange roles depending on situation, so they play so-called integrated gender roles, when roles cannot be divided into feminine and masculine. As a result, occurs certain “grey field”, where partners are equal in their gender roles [26]. Due to the “grey field”, homosexual relations can have an indirect impact on the understanding of gender roles. Their example of equality or performing opposite his/her sex gender role by one of the partners can stimulate heterosexual couples aim to gender equality too.

The basic disputable point is a question about the impact of same-sex relations on main functions of the institute, especially – on reproductive and raising. The question there is about what reproductive function can be carry out in same-sex families and how life with same-sex parents effects on a child.

Reproductive function of family implies that people within a family reproduce their own kind to continue the human race. It is considered, that homosexual couples cannot fulfill this function. But nowadays it is a mistake to believe that all homosexual couples that have children adopted them or are trustees. Reproductive technologies give homosexual couples possibility to have their own biological children. Lesbian families can use services of sperm donors, gay couples – services of surrogate mothers [27]. Also technologies which allow people (also same-sex couples) have a child with equal genetic data from both parents were invented. Often same-sex families raise children from previous heterosexual relationship. In the USA more than 1/3 of lesbians bear their children, and 1 of 6 gays are biological fathers of children they raise¹² [28]. In Poland approximately 9% of homosexual couples have children, and vast majority of these children were born in previous heterosexual relations¹³ [29].

Function of raising and socialization implies that family impart to child main social norms and values,

adopt him/her to life in society and make everything to make their baby feel comfortable, develop without any deviations. Opponents of same-sex parenting say that socialization in such environment is destructive and harm the child. But different studies show another data.

In results of researches held by APA, children from same-sex families are well-balanced and inherit similar to children from heterosexual families’ models of gender behavior¹⁴. There are no differences in sexual identity, the formation of ideas about myself [30]. According to the research by The University of Melbourne in Australian, children raised in homosexual families are normal and in some cases even suppress their coevals – level of general health and family unity is higher on 6%. Emotional behavior and physical health do not differ from other children¹⁵ [31]. Study in Netherlands showed that children in lesbians’ families felt less pressure from parents. No differences were found on psychosocial adjustment. Gender typicality, gender contentedness and anticipated future heterosexual romantic involvement were significant predictors of psychosocial adjustment in both family types¹⁶ [32].

Conclusion

The impact of homosexual relationship on the institute of family cannot be denied. But this impact also cannot be called negative or defining in modern family transformations. Usually it goes together with other internal and external factors. Same-sex relations have strong impact on values and norms of the institute, transformation of “family life cycle”, on the understanding of reproductive function of family. They caused an appearance of new family form – homosexual family. However, they have subsidiary impact on changing of gender roles, where the main factor was the struggle for gender equality. Minor impact same-sex relations have on raising function of family.

Talking about nearest future it can be supposed that the impact of homosexual relationship will not change because it is new structure of the institute and does not have enough stability to make great changes without affecting itself. Now same-sex families live in the same way as heterosexual with the only difference that partners are people of one sex.

¹²U.S. Census Bureau [www.census.gov/acs/www].

¹³Research of the Institute of Psychology National Academy. There were polled more than 3,000 men aged 18-81 during 3 years.

¹⁴There were polled 106 families, 56 homosexual and 50 heterosexual, who adopted children in first weeks of their life.

¹⁵In research took part 315 same-sex families and 500 children bearing by them.

¹⁶In research took part children from 63 lesbian and 68 heterosexual families. All children were aged 8-12.

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Легализация однополых сексуальных отношений и трансформации института семьи

К. В. Черняк

Аннотация. Легализация однополых сексуальных отношений стала причиной множества дискуссий, одна из которых – вопрос о влиянии однополых отношений на институт семьи. Исследование показало, что данное влияние действительно имеет место быть, например, в изменении ценностной системы института, возникновении новых форм семьи, устаревании понятия «жизненный цикл семьи», изменении гендерных ролей и содержательной стороны некоторых функций семьи. Однако это влияние нельзя назвать всегда определяющим, оно часто сопровождается другие внешними и внутренними факторами.

Ключевые слова: институт семьи, современные трансформации семьи, брак, однополые отношения, гомосексуальность.