

**SOCIAL HEALTH AND IDENTITY OF MODERN YOUTH OF RUSSIAN SOCIETY  
AS A SOCIAL SAFETY FACTOR**

**Gafiatulina** candidate of sociological science, associate professor of Department  
**Natalya** of Regional Sociology and Social Process Modeling, Institute of Sociology  
**Halilovna** and Regional Studies of Southern federal university  
(160, Pushkinskaya St., Rostov-on-Don, 344022, Russian Federation).  
E-mail:gafiatulina@yandex.ru

**Abstract**

*Transformation of traditional youth values and patterns of behavior – is a result, first of all, of changes in a Russian society. The main aim of the article (and our study on the whole) is to see correlation between social health and identity of Russian youth with society security and to prove that social health and identity of youth are among major determinators of society security. Obtained results show that traditional practice of masculinity and feminity phenomena among youth are interconnected; however, female youth images are transformed more quickly than those of men. Female representations about men and representations of men about themselves often do not coincide, which provoke misunderstandings and gender conflicts, determining divorce and “marriage-family distance” of young people. These deteriorates demographical sphere of the society and negatively influences society security and stable development. The state of health (physical and social) of Russian youth is determined by a number of factors, including psycho-physical, socio-historical, cultural, etc. Health and identity of youth is considered to be a factor of social security and society stability, which requires an essential increase of social potential of people as the basic strategic resource of the society.*

**Keywords:** *Russian youth, health, social health, gender, marriage, family, identity, social security, stability, masculinity, Russian society.*

Health within social health of people is an important characteristic feature of an individual, group and public health. At the societal level social health is an essential characteristic feature of society's vitality as a social organism, potential and real possibility of its constructive development in spiritual, economic, political, military and other spheres. It is an ability of the whole social group and each individual member in the particular conditions of life to exercise his/her own social and biological functions. Based on this definition, (social) health of youth is the most sensitive barometer reflecting the state of any society as a whole because it extrapolates present and future level and state of social health of society. No doubt, that social health is a factor affecting all the processes occurring in society. We understand security in the broadest way (any, social, national) as absence of danger or minimized conditions of danger.

Defining a strategic objective of (social) health of Russian youth as a factor of ensuring national security it is important to analyze both criteria of health and identity of youth and correlation of those with security and stability of society. It is important as security is based on the ideals of physical and social potential of the nation.

In conditions of intensive social dynamics the personal sphere (including sexual) of freedom of any individual expands. Freedom of a choice is closely connected with macro social processes and generates new problems on individual and societal levels. For example, effective contraception today allows individuals to supervise own birth rate meaningfully, but in parallel promotes ageing of the population and depopulation in a society. Democracy and freedom of choice provide the individual a variety of behavioral patterns and loose any pressure of a society – that may be good for the health of any person, but such a situation at the same time is a binary opposition – on the other hand a society may enter the condition of anomie, according to E. Durkheim and R. Merton. Thus it may promote instability and fluctuating development of a society. We shall continue discussion on the topic of the youth's health – an example of sexual, intimate aspects. We include the sexual behavior into the area of intimate health, we see it at large, and we show interdependence of intimate health and its social determinants. We share the point of view of the American social psychologist Barbara De Angelis [1, p. 37], who defines intimate sphere of the individual widely spreading into all individual privacy (sexual acts, communication between young people (men and women), a social context in gender aspect, etc.). Much is included.

Today the modern medicine has noticeably expanded age frameworks of intimate activity, allowing individuals, in particular, to test sexual pleasures oftener and longer, than that was in the past. Physi-

ological reasons of the man's impotence, female analgesia are corrected. However, it is necessary to mention, that it is structurally possible only at high enough standard of well-being of the population and the developed system of public health services. Poor and uneducated individuals, groups, communities remain intimately - sexually unhappy and non-healthy.

Dynamics of the gender order, modes and contracts in a society considerably define the character and specificity of intimate sphere of individuals. Saying that we completely share the points of view of sociologists A.Temkina, E.Zdravomyslova, S. Whitehead, etc. At a level of separate social institutes the gender order is shown in various "gender modes". As R.Konnell's examples the family, the state, the teenage community, the localized interactions within the limits of the city space and so forth [2, pp. 10-40] result in gender modes of such social institute, as school.

Among the Russian researchers the problem of intimate sphere of individuals, in particular, are found in the studies of A.Temkina and E.Zdravomyslova. They, for example, within the limits of discursive analysis (for conceptualization of changes in sexual-cultural sphere) suggest using concept "a mode of sexuality" [3, pp. 20-35]. The researchers define modes of sexuality as rather independent ways of the organization of the sexual ways of behaviour, representing the set of external (structural) conditions, instructions and restrictions, on the one hand, and practical actions of agents - on the other. They suggest a number of the parameters describing modes of sexuality, for instance: 1) a mode dominating heterosexuality (it is defined by acts, the level of public tolerance in relation to other sexual preferences.) - In conditions of significant *social dynamics* (further: *SD*) we observe greater tolerance to persons "loving differently" today, than, say, on the pre-Soviet and Soviet spaces, that, accordingly, can promote increase of the level of intimate youth's health, 2) a mode of gender polarization (in this case it is a question of a range and criteria of distinctions in instructions in occasion of sexuality for young men and women) - within the limits of *SD* more harmonious, partner attitudes with a wide range of patterns of behavior are observed, that also can promote preventive practice of health of both sexes (gender subjects), 3) the marriage-reproductive mode (the parity of sexuality and child-birth - reproduction) - *SD* promotes precise differentiation of phenomena "sexuality" and "reproduction", that gives the individual freedom of a choice, and initiates absence of pressure, at least, in personal health sphere of youth, 4) if during the Soviet time the given mode, most likely, meant a romantic mode (connects sexual behavior with romantic feelings only, in this case today sexuality is a consequence and expression of love and passion). Platonic relations (suppression of a sexual inclination, desire) today is a matter of choice for the individual who can personally choose for himself/herself the pattern of behavior, that promotes him/her his/her health, 5) a communicative mode (within the limits of this mode sexuality means and/or making part of heterosexual dialogue, for example, "realization of some sexual act (for an example - promiscuity) in friendly circles which can serve as a marker of identity to the social environment" [3]) - and for that the individual will not be stigmatized, accordingly, individuals with specific sexual desires can satisfy themselves the way good for the health, 6) a market mode (sexuality is considered as the subject of tender and an exchange) - in conditions of *SD* the attitude to the given mode has cardinally changed: earlier, let us say in the soviet times there were stigmatized male and female prostitutes, but today - they are called "sex-workers" whose "labor" should get a social support, medical aid, that, in turn, we can be most probably sure that promotes protection of health, 7) a hedonistic mode (connects sexuality with corporal pleasures, in this case sexuality is independent from marriage and reproduction sphere at all) - the aspiration to take pleasure in intimate (sexual) relations was characteristic for any person since ancient times; we shall tell, during Soviet times it "was hidden" under marriage and reproduction, but today, especially, young people, but not necessarily, declare that openly, 8) a mode of risk (within the frames of this mode sexuality is considered as the reason and the source of social illnesses: violence, epidemics, etc.) - within *SD*, really, risks increase, both at the personal/micro-social level and at the macro-level of a society, however, democratization of the Russian society, freedom of an individual choice in private sphere considerably compensate these risks in the form of preventive maintenance and development of health for any individual, instead of "collective", really not existing "a collective image" of the person of the Soviet period.

Researcher S. Whitehead [4, p. 15] too quite reasonably describes "old and new sexual contracts". As well as all the human contracts, the sexual contract is based on balancing of power. "The old sexual contract" reflected fundamental imbalance of power between men and women. In this contract there was the following exchange: women "got marriage, children, love and protection, men carried out the roles to realize these, but they took on the responsibilities in exchange for regular sex, cooked food and the washed clothes". Sexual preferences, etc. of women were not considered, sex pleasure was mostly meant for the man. Passivity of women was expected and admitted (on all levels). Actually, young women put themselves in such situation, denying need and desire of sexual pleasure. "The new sexual contract"

cardinally differs from the previous one: on the basis of the recognition of the fact, that sex for the woman is as important, as well as for the young man. Today young women start sexual relations with young men, expecting, that their sexual needs will be satisfied. Many women, naturally, at the same time expect long-term marriage, children, love, etc., but realization of sexual needs and desires remains one of the main priority purposes of the modern woman. It is possible to presuppose, that within the frames of "the new sexual contract" raise both: self-estimation of the man, and his level of health and even more: contemporary self-sufficient, active "alpha-male" expects some similar featured, initiative "female", who is not passive at all, but quite active.

In the past two decades, researchers (S. Golod and his supporters) [5, p. 35] proved that female sexuality is more similar to that of a male, at least, from the physiological point of view, than had been perceived by the public image of both sexuality and love. Though this similarity was mentioned by Kinsey [6, pp. 1-20] as long ago as 1953, and was confirmed by Masters and Johnson in 1966, public acceptance had lagged far behind. S. Golod and his supporters suggest that convergence of sexuality in the two sexes arises because contemporary females behave in the ways more like the "traditional man's pattern". We can say, that such state of affairs promotes greater mutual understanding between sexes (genders), including intimate sphere and reduces stress that influences social health negatively.

Social stereotypes considerably determine the character of the private sphere of the individual. We shall illustrate that with the help of the following stereotype. Both young men, and women consider each other as sexual objects, but differently. For example, men often consider woman as "a piece", "a skirt", "great breasts", etc., that in the direct image means man's domination and control over the woman [7, pp. 30-35]. Safilios-Rothschild C. [8, p. 55] thinks, that women also consider men as sexual objects, but in the way the man can economically support her. It is possible to draw a conclusion: that is bilateral process, and both genders can structurally use it. In the current conditions of SD, very few people will condemn a man for taking pleasure from erotic magazine or reading advertising with sexual implied sense. Neither would a woman be condemned for openly declaring to the partner that she wants the man with whom she will develop sexual relations who would provide her with economic support, and probably further will become a sponsor for possible family and mutual children [9, p. 12]. Most contemporary men do not take offence at such straightforwardness - they respect the woman for her high self-estimation, frankness, and concern for possible future family and children. When a man knows expectations of a woman, he is quieter, is assured, that promotes some protection of his health. Open communication and mutual understanding increases man's assurance and confidence and reduce conflict, uncertainty and stress that undermine both relationships and social health of youth [10, pp. 1-16].

We agree with the opinion of the Russian sociologist and sexologist I. Kon [11, pp. 120-145], that on the pre-Soviet and Soviet spaces human sexual behavior was basically considered in the context of marriage-family relationships. Today there is a noticeable differentiation between marriage and sexual activity which is significant by itself and not connected with marriage or family at all. Neither monogamous marriage, nor formalized constant partner relations (cohabitation) disappear these days. We can confidently say that the value of a family, marriage, parenthood continue to be on the rise today, this was also confirmed by the results of our research of students of Southern Federal university, 2015. But, anyway, family values change - there is dynamics in values, family and marriage forms, etc., - e.g. the first positions in our ranging were occupied by "quality indicators" of personal well-being, and that may be some perspective in the sense of preventive development of health of both sexes. The classical model of marriage is a rigid social institute and "contemporary partnership and marriages tends to be "pure" [10], self-valuable, based on intimacy, irrespective of the way of relationships registration.

It is difficult to tell, whether the typical form of sexual partnership of contemporary young men - serial monogamy- is good or not [11, pp. 20-45]. An individual lives only with one partner, but this relationship may last not all life long, but only for some period of time. From the medical point of view it is good for the development of man's health, more likely. However the given phenomenon contradicts the most social idea of a lifelong marriage union. In the conditions of intensive SD such practice becomes more and more widespread. Quick social transformations provoke "temporariness" of intimate, sexual partnership, basically, which, in turn, "does any social identity and associated spheres (professional, territorially-ethnic, confessional, etc.) more changeable and replaceable" [12, p. 11]. In any society such situation initiates the state of uncertainty (which may deteriorate a society from inside and outside - national security), but at the same time increases the degree of individual freedom of a choice. In spite of noticeable SD, I. Kon thinks, that "responsible partnership" and "responsible parenthood" are still the most important socially-moral imperatives of a modern society. The results of our research of Russian students (2015) prove that too.

Turning to the specific question of specificity of the formation of masculinity and man's identity in Russia we can say, that the gender order and stereotypes in Russia have been practically always inconsistent [12]. During its historical development the Russian society was traditionally patriarchal, but women played a greater role in a family, political and cultural life than men. Philosophers and specialists of folklore mark such characteristics, as the "femininity of Russian soul and Russian national character". In Russian (especially national) culture, Russia always appears as an image of a strong, powerful mother. In the Russian family there was a tradition to respect a "woman-mother" most strongly. On this background "the Russian man" – fathers, husbands, sons practically always look as weaklings, irresolute, dependent. Masculinity of such "suppressed" men demonstrated itself basically in a destructive, antisocial form: fights, drunkenness, reckless behavior. We agree with the researchers who see the reasons of that in, so called, "political despotism" and the "strangled individuality". The level of man's health in such conditions always leaves much to be desired. Even if a man's masculinity was priori incorporated, but it was fast lost, ruined in such vital circumstances.

The Soviet authority continued to develop some inconsistent gender order, roles and contracts [11]. Totalitarianism of the Soviet period continued to be called "man's culture" and the phenomenon of "unisex" in all spheres was considerably a masculinity type. "Equality of sexes" in the Soviet way assumed that the behavior of women conformed to the man's traditional pattern. The strong Russian woman and a number of other powerful factors (an economic inefficiency, political despotism, and bureaucracy) suppressed Russian man's individuality, his initiative and independence. From the moment of his birth, during all socialization period the man was socially, intimately (sexually) "pressed" and dependent. Priority having strong health any Russian man would "lose" it rapidly.

Changed life on the post-Soviet space again placed the Russian man into the "scissors" – there was freedom of choice in everything, there was a world full of variety, however many people did not know how to use such freedom after the USSR broke, and some already got used to live dependently – in the "the Soviet way". A plenty of the Russian men who found themselves in a completely new situation could not find any niche for themselves, some became drunkards or committed suicide. Others, having lost work, tried "to hide themselves behind the Russian woman back", tyrannizing the wife (approving his man's identity that way). It is quite understandable that the Russian men's health started to decline [11]. Not many Russian men managed to cope with the situation and become successful even in specific 1990-ies.

It is clear that the change from "the collective Soviet" standards to "individualization of the post-Soviet" pluralism in the society strengthened necessity of recognition of different types of masculinity/femininity and individual specific styles of life which in general could hardly be entered into the mentality of the former Soviet individual.

There are some general features of the Soviet and post-Soviet periods which do not promote preventive practice and protection of man's health. For example, total feminization of various institutes of socialization and dominant female images. Even today in many couples where the father is physically present, his power in the family and the role in education of his children is often considerably lower, than the role of the mother. Fathers possess advantage only in information sphere when it is a question, for instance, of politics and sports [11]. In the kindergartens, schools, high schools the main figures are women again. After the marriage the man often should live with possibly loving, careful, but quite often a dominant wife who, most likely, on the majority of parameters is similar to her own mother. Health, especially sexual, since man's sexuality priori assumes some kind of aggression, initiative for a long time is suppressed and a young partner/husband's health would become worse rapidly.

We already mentioned above, that the identification of "weak" masculinity can have some variants: identification with image of the strong and aggressive man – strong alpha-male accepting drunkenness, fights, cruelty, membership in the gangs, social and sexual violence, humility; these can be compensated by severe tyranny in the family, in relation to the wife and children, social passivity. Not having learned since the childhood to self-managing and overcoming difficulties, some men up to the end of his life can be deprived of personal independence and responsibility, which deteriorate their health in many aspects. Any way of above-mentioned patterns of the man's behavior brings him dissatisfaction that leads to loss of health and probably short life-span. Demographer B.T. Uralnis [11] dwells upon the medical statistics on death rate, smaller life expectancy of men, bad habits, alcoholism, smoking, risky behavior of men, underlines, that men are not strong at all, does not matter what social stereotypes may be, but on the contrary – they are a weaker sex and gender (if stress on social aspects) than women, and men themselves need care.

#### *Comments on some results of the case-study*

Early 2015 we conducted the case-study with the 1<sup>st</sup> year students of the linguistic faculty Southern Federal University Rostov-on-Don Russian Federation. There were 120 respondents (19-23 years of

age, 70% girls and 30% boys) who mainly wrote their own stories, giving real life cases describing “real men” and “real women” and the indicators of them in the contemporary Russian society context. “Mind” and “sexuality” are not a priority for many. “Mind” is not the most important quality, it’s just a gift from above and it is to some extent inherent in all. The same can be said about “sexuality”, and this quality is not important, it’s a subjective feature, as well as the “mind”. Both men and women possess them. More appropriate here would be the question of how reasonably both genders use these qualities. “Courtesy”, “loyalty” and “politeness” are not a priority for modern girls, unfortunately, as the results of the survey show.

Some respondents choose “mystery” and “optimism” as the main advantages of the contemporary men. In our opinion, traditionally “mystery” is more characteristic of the female part of the population than men, but nevertheless it stands in the first row of the main qualities and plays a significant role in the partner, as well as charisma nowadays [12].

Let us speak also about some results of the applied research of readiness issues of modern Russian young people to marriage, which was done among the students of the Amur state university named for Sh. Aleichem. There were 847 respondents (540 girls and 307 boys) [13, pp. 25-56]. The main research methods involved were the following: monitoring, study materials psychological counseling of students, interview, ranking method, method of unfinished sentences and compositions. There were chosen two main directions of research: factors of willingness towards marriage and level of readiness for marriage.

Students youth who participated in the study, go through the conflict in the area of the formed behavior patterns in everyday psychology in the content of the image of a family and family myths. Youth already have had some family experience interaction and they have a stable assessment of this experience, which usually is based on common stereotypes and mythology. For example, “the family is when people are always together, they have everything in common, common views, they never argue”, etc. From the generalized portrait of the future spouse we see that boys and girls discover set requirements to the partner and not accepting him/her as he/she is. So, there is the myth of obligation as the basis of family relations [14, pp. 1-9]. The youth in their speech constantly use the word “must”: “wife must...”, “husband must...”, etc. Perception of the category “freedom” in relation to the family is negatively received by the students. The results of the applied research prove the hypothesis that readiness for marriage of the contemporary Russian students is a problem [15]. Found out contradictions between the images of ideal and real partner. There is a danger of really high requirements to the real partner and frustration in the partner, which can cause problems in the relationship. That, as a part of social health sphere and identity of men in particular, determines social security and stability of the society rather negatively [16].

It is possible to say that there is insufficient quantity of Russian scientific researches of the chosen topic for the article, esp. masculinity phenomena and health and identity questions of the Russian youth, also in the correlation with security and stability [17]. Scientific problematic field of such researches may be complicated by the variety, specific character, dynamics of images changes plus fluctuation processes of value change in the Russian society, etc.

## References

1. *B. De Angelis*. Real Moments. 2003.
2. *Sazhina L.* Dynamics of modern gender cultures. The analysis of the Russian and Western societies. Monography. LAP LAMBERT Academic Publishing, Germany, 2011. - P. 326.
3. *Temkina A.* Scenarios of sexuality and gender distinctions. In searches of sexuality. SPb: Bulanin, 2002.
4. *Whitehead S.* Men, Women, Love and Romance. Under the Covers of the Bedroom Revolution. Fusion Press, GB, 2003.
5. *S. Golod.* XX Century and tendencies of sexual relations in Russia. SPb, 1996.
6. *Kinsey A., Wardell B., etc.* Sexual Behavior in the Human Female. Philadelphia: Saunders, 1953.
7. *Masters W., Johnson V.* Human Sexual Response. Boston: Little, Brown, 1966.
8. *Rubin L.* Erotic Wars: What Happened to Sexual Revolution? New York: Farrar, Straus, Giroux, 1990.
9. *Bogaert A. and Fisher W.* Predictors of university men’s number of sexual partners. Journal of Sex Research, 1995. Vol. 32.
10. *Giddens A.* Transformations of intimacy. SPb: Peter, 2004. P. 208.
11. *Kon I.* Interdisciplinary researches. Rostov-on-Don: the Phoenix, 2006.
12. The Review of data: *I. Kon.* The child and a society (historical-ethnographic prospect). M.: Science, 1988. Ch. 5.

13. Psychological-pedagogical problems of the family of XXI century: collective scientific monography / edited by A.Yu. Nagornova. Yljanovsk: Zebra, 2016. P. 424.
14. Sazhina L.V. Sociological analysis of the factors, modeling physical and emotional aspects of health of the contemporary student youth of Southern federal university // Engineering Bulletin of Don, 2014, № 3. URL: ivdon.ru/magazine/archive/n3y2014.
15. Vereshchagina, A., Gafiatulina, N., Kumykov, A., Stepanov, O. & Samygin, S. Gender Analysis of Social Health of Students. Review of European Studies, 2015, Vol. 7, No. 7, pp. 223-230. Retrieved from URL: ccsenet.org/journal/index.php/res/article/view/48999.
16. Vereshchagina, A., Gafiatulina, N., Samygin, S. Spiritual aspects of national identity formation: sociological analysis of threats to social health and spiritual security of Russia // Engineering Bulletin of Don, 2015, №3 URL: ivdon.ru/magazine/archive/n3y2015/3195.
17. Gafiatulina, N.Kh. Social health of student youth as an indicator of social-cultural integration // Social-humanitarian knowledge. 2013. №11. pp. 255-261.

---

### СОЦИАЛЬНОЕ ЗДОРОВЬЕ И ИДЕНТИЧНОСТЬ СОВРЕМЕННОЙ МОЛОДЕЖИ РОССИЙСКОГО ОБЩЕСТВА КАК ФАКТОР СОЦИАЛЬНОЙ БЕЗОПАСНОСТИ

**Гафиатулина Наталья Халиловна**, кандидат социологических наук, доцент, докторант кафедры региональной социологии и моделирования социальных процессов, Институт социологии и регионоведения Южного федерального университета (344022, Россия, г. Ростов-на-Дону, ул. Пушкинская, 160). E-mail: gafiatulina@yandex.ru

#### **Аннотация**

*Трансформация традиционных молодежных ценностей и моделей поведения – это результат, прежде всего, изменений в российском обществе. Основная цель статьи (и нашего исследования в целом) состоит в том, чтобы увидеть корреляцию между социальным здоровьем и идентичностью российской молодежи с безопасностью общества и доказать, что социальное здоровье и идентичность молодежи являются одними из главных определяющих факторов безопасности общества. Полученные результаты показывают, что традиционная практика явлений мужественности и женственности в молодежной среде взаимосвязана; однако женские молодежные образы трансформируются быстрее, чем мужские. Представления юношей о девушках и представления юношей о себе часто не совпадают, что провоцирует недопонимание и гендерные конфликты, определяя развод и «брачно-семейную дистанцию» молодых людей. Это ухудшает демографическую сферу общества и негативно влияет на безопасность общества и его устойчивое развитие. Состояние здоровья (физического и социального) российской молодежи определяется рядом факторов, в том числе психофизическими, социально-историческими, культурными и т. д. Здоровье и идентичность молодежи считается фактором социальной безопасности и стабильности общества, что требует существенного повышения социального потенциала людей как основного стратегического ресурса общества.*

**Ключевые слова:** российская молодежь, здоровье, социальное здоровье, пол, брак, семья, идентичность, безопасность, социальная безопасность, стабильность, мужественность, российское общество.