Parenthood and life satisfaction. Russia in comparative perspective

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Children = happiness?
Consistent picture for UK, DE, & CH

German SOEP

Source: Myrskylä & Margolis (2012)

Swiss Household Panel

Source: Rizzi & Mikucka

British Household Panel Study

Source: Myrskylä & Margolis (2012)
Everything is clear!

Thank you for your attention!

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Problem?

Are we all really (like) Western Europeans?
The case of Russia

young parenthood

low overall fertility combined with low childlessness

limited fertility at higher levels of parity
Questions

How do children contribute to life satisfaction in Russia?
Anticipation effect?
Strong increase at 1st birth for women?
Subsequent decline?

Under which conditions?
More educated?
Older at birth?
In stable relationships?
Better off economically?
Why bother?

effects on fertility

conditions for parenthood for specific groups
16 waves (II Stage of the program), initiated in 1994

To what extent are you satisfied with your life in general at the present time?
5 – fully satisfied, 1 – not at all satisfied

fixed effect models comparing well-being of (prospective) parents over time (no comparison with non-parents)
Are Russians (like) Western Europeans?
Are Russians (like) Western Europeans?

![Graph showing life satisfaction over child's age for men and women. The lines represent different age periods, with distinct patterns indicating varying levels of satisfaction.](image_url)
Summing up (1/2)

- anticipation effect and peak at the first birth are missing
- some occur at the 2nd birth
  - is the second child the first child of choice in Russia?
- increase at older ages of the child
Older, educated, married

Source: Myrskylä & Margolis (2012)
Older?

First child:

Second child:

Graphs by group

2.5 3 3.5 4 4.5
−4 0 5 10 15 20 25
men women
men, < med age at 1st birth women, < med age at 1st birth
men, > med age at 1st birth women, > med age at 1st birth
Life satisfaction
Child’s age

3 3.5 4 4.5
−4 0 5 10 15 20 25
men women
men, < med age at 1st birth women, < med age at 1st birth
men, > med age at 1st birth women, > med age at 1st birth
Life satisfaction
Child’s age

Graphs by group

(first child)
Educated?

First child:

Second child:

Graphs by group

Life satisfaction

Child's age

men
women
men, tertiary education
women, tertiary education
men, lower education
women, lower education

Graphs by group
In stable relationship?

**First child:**

![Graph showing life satisfaction by age for men and women, with differentiated lines for men, experienced divorce; men, never divorced; women, experienced divorce; and women, never divorced.

**Second child:**

![Graph showing life satisfaction by age for men and women, with differentiated lines for men, experienced divorce; men, never divorced; women, experienced divorce; and women, never divorced.

Graphs by group.
Wealthier?

First child:

Second child:

Graphs by group
Summing up (2/2)

As expected:

- positive effect among parents older at 1st birth – BUT 2nd birth!
- more positive trajectory among higher educated men

Specific for Russia:

- significant increase of life satisfaction for those in stable marriages, poorer (also away from big cities)
Conclusions

Some similarities, but overall different pattern:

- the second child is the child of choice?
- ‘traditional’ parenthood pattern (child as an investment?) among the poorer, not divorcing residents of provincial Russia
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Thank you!
Change over time

First child:

Second child:
Cities

First child:

Second child:

Graphs by group

- men, S.Pet. and Moscow
- women, S.Pet. and Moscow
- men, other
- women, other
Ethnic differences

First child:

Second child:

Graphs by group