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Cross-Cultural Marriages in the Context of the Transformation of the Family Model: Russia and Iran

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Abstract

Introduction. The relevance of the study of cross-cultural marriages in Russia and Iran is due to the fact that Russia and Iran are characterized by both attention to the observance of cultural needs and the desire for innovative development. These contradictory manifestations are also manifested in family and marriage relations. There is a shortage of empirical studies that reflect the range of opinions of various social strata in Russia and Iran, allowing a comparative analysis of attitudes towards cross-cultural marriages to determine the prospects for state policy to support the institution of marriage in a cross-cultural environment. The purpose of the public research is to analyze the relationship with cross-cultural marriages in Russia and Iran against the background of the proposed family model. **Materials and Methods.** Sociological research is carried out by the method of a quantitative survey. 153 people were interviewed in total, urban residents of Russia and Iran aged 18 to 60 who are in cross-cultural marriages or an interethnic, interfaith environment. To analyze the results, descriptive statistics methods, frequency distributions, and a tabular data visualization method were used.

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Results. The survey results have revealed the presence of different ideas about the desired model of family and marriage both in Iran and Russia (both traditional and modern). The study has revealed a friendly attitude towards interethnic marriages in both countries (primarily for urban residents). In many ways, the success of cross-cultural marriages is determined by the attitude of relatives and the local community towards them.

Discussion and Conclusion. The results obtained can be used to develop strategies for the development of socio-cultural interaction between Russia and Iran. It is essential to consider the study's conclusions when supporting cross-cultural families in the process of adaptation and acquaintance with the norms, traditions, and customs of a new culture spouse. It is necessary to conduct a study on a more representative sample to assess the differentiation and determinants of people's opinions in interethnic marriages living in Iran and Russia.

Keywords: cross-cultural marriages, the institution of the family, interethnic and international relations, the institution of marriage in Russia and Iran, intercultural interactions

Conflict of interests. The authors declare that there is no conflict of interest.

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Научная статья

Межкультурные браки в условиях трансформации модели семьи: на примере России и Ирана

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Аннотация

Введение. Актуальность исследования кросскультурных браков в России и Иране обусловлена тем, что для этих двух стран характерно как внимание к традиционным культурным ценностям, так и стремление к инновационному развитию. Эти противоречивые тенденции проявляются и в семейно-брачных отношениях. Существует недостаток эмпирических исследований, отражающих спектр мнений представителей различных социальных страт России и Ирана, позволяющих провести сравнительный анализ отношений к кросскультурным бракам, определить перспективы государственной политики по поддержке института брака в кросскультурной среде. Цель статьи – на основе проведенного исследования проанализировать отношения к кросскультурным бракам в России и Иране на фоне представлений о желаемой модели семьи.

Материалы и методы. Проведен опрос 153 чел. – городских жителей России и Ирана в возрасте от 18 до 60 лет, состоящих в кросскультурных браках либо находящихся в межэтнической, межконфессиональной среде. Для анализа результатов использовались методы дескриптивной статистики, частотные распределения, а также табличный метод визуализации данных.



Результаты исследования. Выявлены традиционные и современные представления о желаемой модели семьи и брака для России и для Ирана. Исследование показало довольно доброжелательное отношение к межэтническим бракам в обеих странах (прежде всего для городских жителей). Во многом успешно кросскультурных браков определяется отношением к ним родных и местного сообщества.

Обсуждение и заключение. Полученные результаты могут быть использованы при разработке стратегий развития социокультурного взаимодействия России и Ирана. Выводы исследования важно учитывать при оказании поддержки кросскультурным семьям в процессе адаптации и знакомства с нормами, традициями, обычаями новой для супруга/супруги культуры. Необходимо проведение исследования на более представительной выборке для оценки дифференциации и детерминант мнений людей, состоящих в межнациональных браках, проживающих в Иране и России.

Ключевые слова: кросскультурный брак, институт семьи, межэтнические и межнациональные отношения, институт брака в России и Иране, межкультурные взаимодействия

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Introduction. The necessity to identify the main trends and specifics of the formation of the institution of cross-cultural marriages is justified by the awareness of the importance of the family as the most stable social institution. Family is a complex, multidimensional social formation and, in fact, concentrates the entire set of social relations, which is reflected in consolidation, coherence, and possible conflicts similar to the phenomena and processes occurring in the development of any society. Currently, cross-cultural marriages are studied based on separate theories of certain scientific disciplines, such as sociology, religious studies, ethnology, anthropology, demography, and cultural studies.

However, in our opinion, since there are no official statistics on cross-cultural marriages in the public organizations, it is impossible to characterize this object of research fully and reliably. In this regard, it becomes necessary to conduct a sociological survey (based on the method of selective statistical observation) to identify the factors of the formation of the institution of cross-cultural marriages in Russia and Iran which have not been previously developed or conducted, that determines the novelty of this study. The data obtained make it possible to analyze cross-cultural marriage as a family union of people who are carriers of various socio-cultural traditions, characteristics, and values.

Specialized sociological surveys to identify factors in the formation of cross-cultural marriages in Russia and Iran (with a single methodology, tasks, tools that allow comparison and comparison of data in countries) have not been previously conducted, which determines the study's novelty. The study aims to analyze attitudes towards cross-cultural marriages in Russia and Iran against the background of ideas about the desired family model.



Literature Review. The unique identity of cross-cultural marriages is associated with the creation of a family between representatives of different cultures. C. Sullivan, R. Cottone define “mixed marriage” as a type of marriage in which partners are of different nationalities, cultural origins, or religions [1, p. 221–225]. In interaction of ethnic cultures, and development of marriage migration, studying the problems of the formation and development of the institution of cross-cultural marriages is essential. The works of Romano, Bhugra and De Silva, Root and others show such problems of cross-cultural marriages as language barriers, cultural conflicts, parenting, differences in beliefs, traditions, customs, and values [2; 3]. Many Russian scientists in their works consider interethnic families as a factor in the transformation of ethnic identity, which is reflected in the typology of the settlement of people and the intensity of migration processes [4]. An analysis of the statistics of cross-cultural marriages also makes it possible to conclude the prospects for the development of the entire Russian society [5].

Acceptance of intercultural marriage by society depends on many factors, such as age, gender, economic status, education, social values, etc. Research in this area also relates to various aspects of the study of models that interpret people’s motives when deciding to create an intercultural marriage [6; 7]. Studies in USA show that the young population has a more positive attitude to interracial and intercultural relations than the older population [8], and it is more common among the younger generation. Moreover, although some studies show that there is no relationship between gender and attitudes towards intercultural marriage [9], many studies show that men are more inclined to intercultural relations, this is confirmed by the research of S. O. Törngren, in which men are more positive about intercultural marriage [10]. Women take the marriage decision-making process more seriously than men [11]. Women in the process of choosing a husband consider the profitability of their husband, race, and intelligence, while men mainly focus on physical attractiveness [12]. This means that women choose to marry someone with perceived socioeconomic status. Religious differences and stereotypes strongly influence women's attitudes towards intercultural marriage. For example, in Sweden, the image of a Muslim male often perceived as a threat to women, values, and norms [13]. In addition, the level of education has a positive relationship with attitudes towards interracial marriage (Beta = 0.28, $p < 0.001$, Odds Ratio = 1.32), each one-year increase in education increases the odds of approval by 30 % [9].

The process of moving people across the border to marry a foreign citizen is analyzed as a process of erosion and loss of the demographic potential of the state [14] that has been explained by many Russian scientists. In the context of the study of female marriage emigration from Russia, the work of P. I. Babochkin’s “Cross-cultural marriages in a multi-ethnic environment” shows that “success or failure of cross-cultural marriage depends on the orientation and views of the people getting married” [15]. In research by T. K. Rostovskaya in 2015, the key



motive for creating cross-cultural marriages was identified: “more than 90 % of all respondents – 153 people answered that the dominant factor in premarital relationships is love – the deepest emotional attraction, a strong heart feeling. For many, an important reason is also family traditions and the need for marriage”¹.

Another significant aspect of the study of the problems of cross-cultural marriages is the analysis of attitudes towards marriage among young people. Young people who are representatives of different sociocultural strata when forming a family also face some difficulties caused by differences in the value system of spouses [16; 17]. It is also interesting to analyze the trend that the number of young people who do not want to register their marriage is growing [18]. There is a transformation of attitudes towards the family and family life, new value orientations that young people rely on when deciding to create a family [19].

The problem of self-determination of a child in a cross-cultural family with an Orthodox-Muslim cultural and religious model of marriage and family relations was also developed in the works of T. K. Rostovskaya and A. D. Suleimanov. The authors note that “it is not acute in the Russian-Turkish family, since the relationship between the child and the parents is built on an equal footing based on cross-cultural interaction and communication. The basis of this relationship between the child and the parents is a trusting relationship between spouses, where there is love, mutual understanding and mutual respect of all family members” [20]. Thus, the viability of the Orthodox-Muslim cultural and religious model of marriage and family relations depends directly on the motive for creating such a cross-cultural family. Considering the viability of cross-cultural marriages in Japan, which make up about 3 % of the total number of registered marriages, the authors note the positive role of marriage and family relations between Japanese men and Russian girls, “which are able to ensure not only close interaction between representatives of different cultures, ethnic groups, and religions, but also to form managerial and organizational processes aimed at improving relations between countries and ethnic groups” [21].

Research shows that Iranians are also flexible in terms of accepting the culture of the countries in which they live. Iranians retain and represent their Persian values and behavior, and they also deeply embrace the Western culture of the countries in which they live [22]. Iranians living in the United States of America have shown that they are raising their children based on Iranian traditions and cultures, but at the same time they believe in the importance of integrating their children into the US society, moreover, they are open to the marriage of their children to people of other nationalities [23]. Intercultural marriages between Iranian American women who are married to European-American men show that successful adjustment to their marriage is the result of similar values and beliefs, respect and understanding, which are consistent with individual characteristics in

¹ Rostovskaya T.K., Egorychev A.M. Modern Russian Realities and Youth: Problems and Prospects of Development. In: Rostovskaya T.K. (ed.) Cultural Space of Youth: Meanings and Practices: Materials of the All-Russian. Moscow: Perspektiva; 2019. p. 19–23.



beliefs, values, communication, open thinking, and acceptance of differences that reinforce intercultural understanding [24].

Problems of cross-cultural marriages occupy a significant place in the problematic field of research of modern family and marriage. The degree of differences in culture and traditions often acts as a risk factor for the well-being of such a family, provoking intra- and extra-family conflicts. However, there is a lack of empirical studies reflecting the opinions of representatives of various countries, particularly, Russia and Iran.

Materials and Methods. When considering the peculiarities of ideas about the family and cross-cultural marriages in Russia and Iran, the authors relied on the provisions of the concept of the second demographic transition, which considers the change in reproductive and matrimonial values in modern society when “human thoughts are focused on self-realization... and this is reflected in the formation of the family, attitudes in regarding the regulation of births and the motives of parenthood” [25]. A model of demographic behavior is being formed that also concerns the choice of a family career, characterized by a flexible approach to choosing a life path, many possible lifestyles, including in the family sphere². As the study showed, this is also characteristic of today’s Russian and Iranian youth.

The objects of the study were representatives of different age groups, urban residents of Russia and Iran aged 18 to 60 years old (marriageable age), being in cross-cultural marriages, or who are in cross-cultural marriages; having in their environment families based on a cross-cultural marriage (due to educational or professional activities). The research project is based on quantitative research using the pilot method. In this study, 153 people, including 105 Iranians and 48 Russians participated.

The implementation of the research project is based on conducting a quantitative (selective sociological) study in the regions of Russia and Iran using the questionnaire method. The field study was conducted in the spring-summer of 2021. All respondents were informed of the purpose of the study and expressed their willingness to cooperate. The survey is pilot in nature – its tasks were to test the tools and research program, determination of optimal ways of forming a sample population, the need to identify typological groups of respondents. Collecting information for an objective assessment of the characteristics of marriages between Iranians and Russians is very difficult due to the ambiguity of the scale and localization of the general population itself. The latency of many problems in interethnic and interfaith marriages and the inconsistency of views and assessments determined the difficulties in forming survey instruments. Nevertheless, a study on a local population allowed us to draw certain conclusions.

The study results were processed using the IBM SPSS STATISTICS sociological research data analysis program, version 26. Considering the sample size and the

² Lesthaeghe R. Second Demographic Transition. In: The Blackwell Encyclopedia of Sociology. 2015. doi: <https://doi.org/10.1002/9781405165518.wbeoss059.pub2>



stage of the pilot study, descriptive statistics methods, frequency distributions, and tabular data visualization methods were used to analyze the results.

An insignificant number of respondents on the territory of Russia does not allow correct use, including for comparative analysis, of frequency distributions. However, in several cases, the authors found it possible to provide data on the number of people who chose this or that answer option. 61.0 % the Iranian respondents are women and 39.0 % are men, 44 out of 48 Russian respondents were women. The average age of the respondents in Iran was 23.9 years, in Russia – 34.1 years. 91.4 % the Iranian respondents and 39 Russians have higher education. 42.9 % of Iranian respondents continue their studies or works in the field of education. 19 Russian respondents also work in the field of education and 10 respondents work in public administration.

94.2 % Iranian respondents have never been married and only 4.8 % are married. 95 % of Iranians live in complete families. Among Russians, 20 are married, 14 have never been married; there are also respondents who are in unregistered marriage (4) and divorced (5). Nine Russian respondents live in single-parent families. Among Iranian respondents, 23.8 % consider themselves to be believers (adherents of Islam), 30.5 % – do not consider themselves to be believers and the rest found it difficult to answer. Among Russians: 30 people consider themselves believers, including 23 – supporters of Orthodoxy.

Results. *Family and marriage model.* Psychological motives such as love and spiritual closeness, the desire to be married, and live a quiet family life are very important motives in cross-cultural marriage. Marriage is not a criterion of social maturity for most of our respondents. Sexual attraction plays an important role for Russian respondents. And for a significant part of the respondents, marriage is not associated with the birth of children (which is a global demographic trend). The motive “the desire to move to another country” takes the last place among the motives (table 1).

Table 1. Mean points of motivations for concluding a marriage on a 5-point scale

Motives	Iran	Russia
Love	4,67	4,66
Psychological and mental closeness	5,00	4,67
Desire to be married, live a calm family life	5,00	4,50
Desire to achieve independence	3,00	2,57
Sexual attraction	2,67	3,50
Material well-being	2,33	2,33
Desire to have children	2,00	2,67
Desire to move to another country	1,67	2,17

Formalization of family relations is very important in Iranian society, where, culturally and religiously, marriage without registration and the birth of a child out of marriage are not acceptable. Among the Iranian respondents there are those



who believe that “in our time, divorce is normal, it’s okay”, “keeping a family with an unloved person is not worth it, even for the sake of children”, “A man should deal with household issues and raising children on an equal basis with a woman”, “to have and raise a child, it is not necessary to marry”. In general, the official consolidation of family relations is losing its significance for some of the respondents in both countries, and individualization of one’s own desires come to the fore.

Most of the Iranian respondents believe that marriage should be entered into at the age of 25–30 (61.5 %), 32.7 % believe that marriage should be postponed until the age of over 30. There are few supporters (4.8 %) of both early marriage (before 25 years), and those who believe that the age of marriage does not play a role (1.0 %). The desirability of getting married at the age of 25–30 (16 people) is also in the lead among Russian respondents. However, the opinion “the age of marriage does not matter” is in second place (11 people). And there are enough supporters of early marriage (8 people).

To answer the question: “What do you think are the most durable marriages?” Respondents quite often noted the option “marriages based on love” (31.4 % of Iranians and 15 Russians). Russians (16 people) more often than Iranians believe that the most lasting marriages are “concluded at an older age (after 25 years old)”. The second most popular answer among Iranian respondents is “on the basis of strong good friendship between a boy and a girl” (22.9 %).

However, answering the question: “What is an indicator of a successful marriage for you?”, 42 Russian respondents answered that it is primarily “warm mutual relations between spouses”. The answers of Iranian respondents were distributed as follows: “warm mutual relations between spouses” (46.7 %), “material security of the family” (30.5 %), “marriage that meets the norms and traditions accepted in society” (18.1 %), “the presence of children in the family” (2.9 %) and 1.9 % chose “good relations of all generations, brothers and sisters”.

To characterize the family model, an assessment of generational relations plays a very important role. Parents usually provide material assistance to young Iranian families. The most popular answers characterizing the importance and role of parents in a new family were: “buying goods” (67.4 %), “provide financial assistance” (58.4 %), “help in raising children” (47.2 %), “Take care during illness” (34.8 %), “pay for housing” (29.2 %), “help in providing food” (5.6 %), “we ourselves provide them with material assistance” (4.5 %), “we do not receive any help from parents” (3.4 %) “help with the housework” (2.2 %) and “Give wise advice” (2.2 %). Parents usually provide non-material assistance to children in Russia. Most often, parents: “give wise advice” (21 people), “help in raising children” (13 people), “take care of during illness” (8 people), “help with housework” (6 people). The number of families with material assistance from their parents is extremely small: “provide financial assistance” (2 %), “buy goods” (11 %), “pay for housing” (4 %). Some Russians themselves provide material support to their parents (13 people).



Family financial and living conditions. In our study, although the Iranian respondents come mostly from wealthy families, have a good financial situation and live-in harmony in the family, in comparison with the Russian respondents, they are required to reduce their free time to a greater extent to be able to receive sufficient funds for everyday life. The assessments of the Russians are as high, but lower than those of the respondents from Iran and they have worse housing conditions and the provision of clothing and footwear. The level of organization of recreation and spending of free time by family members in Iranian families is estimated half a point lower than by Russians. This speaks of the need to develop leisure infrastructure for families, and families with children.

To assess functioning the modern Iranian and Russian families, we need an overview of the main problems that families face in their family life. For Iranian families, “lack of money, constant material problems” (58 %); fear of losing their job (41 %); conflict relationships with parents (38 %); hopelessness, lack of prospects in life (35 %); and difficulties in organizing everyday life, housekeeping (34 %) are the main answers (table 2).

Table 2. Distribution of respondents from Iran regarding their opinion about the problems that the family faces first of all, %

Problems	Share
Lack of money, constant material problems	58
Fear of losing job	41
Conflicting relationships with parents	38
Hopelessness, lack of prospects in life	35
Difficulties in organizing everyday life, housekeeping	34
Lack of free time	26
Poor living conditions	25
Tiredness, overwork	21
Problems with the organization of recreation	19
Poor health and medical difficulties for family members	15
Conflicting relationship, misunderstanding with a spouse	5
The need to care for sick relatives (disabled people, old people, etc.)	4
Conflicting relationships with children	3
Poor area of living (lack of shops, consumer services, etc.)	3
Poor environment at the place of residence	2

Young people who want to form a family face financial barrier leading to a feeling of hopelessness in life. The main problems of Russian families are “fatigue, overwork” (20 people), “lack of free time” (16 people), and “lack of money, constant material problems” (9 people). It can be concluded that, even



though people are married, they lack communication. This means that families can face relationship problems that affect their well-being and can lead to family breakdown.

About 50 % of the respondents rarely face constant criticism from their spouses. In Iranian societies rarely happens that husbands can restrict the freedom of their spouses, for example, they can restrict the spouses' travel abroad. The opinion of the "other half" imposed on spouses, never, or rarely (67 %) happens in Iranian families. Almost 70 % of respondents noted that they have never or rarely faced inattention and indifference to them, more than 50 % of respondents have never encountered rude attitude and insults, aggressive behavior and physical violence from their families or spouses (table 3).

Table 3. Frequency of manifestation of various negative phenomena in the married life of Iranian respondents, % of the number of married

Problems	Never	Sometimes	Rarely	Often	Difficult to answer	Total
Ongoing criticism from a spouse	12,6	30,1	51,5	1,9	3,9	100,0
Limitation of personal freedom	17,5	39,8	38,8	1,9	1,9	100,0
Pressure and imposition of opinions of the "second half"	21,4	28,2	46,6	1,9	1,9	100,0
Inattention and indifference to me	40,2	28,4	28,4	1,0	2,0	100,0
Rude attitude and insults	54,9	16,7	25,5	1,0	2,0	100,0
Aggressive behavior	56,9	17,6	22,5	1,0	2,0	100,0
Physical violence	58,8	16,7	21,6	1,0	2,0	100,0

It can be concluded that, although in Iranian families there are problems in terms of interpersonal interaction, culturally, and religiously, inattention and indifference to a family member, rudeness and insults, violent behavior and physical violence towards a family member, parents and especially women are considered very immoral and impolite.

Attitude towards cross-cultural marriage. Discussing people of other nationalities, ethnic groups, and cultures, almost 22 % of Iranian respondents mentioned that they communicate with such people with sympathy and joy, 53 % showed a generally positive attitude, 13 % "neutral, do not dislike", 10 % "negatively, but calmly – I don't want to notice them" and 2 % chose "strongly negative against them". There were no Russian respondents who would declare negative attitude towards other ethnic groups. 28 people answered with sympathy and joy, they communicate with them.

Only 4 Russians out of 48 and 27.4 % of Iranians answered that there were no acquaintances in their environment who were in interethnic marriages.



Approximately 60 % of respondents from Iran and 31 respondents from Russia noted that among their acquaintances, there are people in interethnic marriages, 5.3 % themselves are (were) in an interethnic marriage. The survey results show that 40 % of Iranian respondents generally approve this experience of organizing family life, 29 % fully support this practice, almost 24 % note that their attitude towards interethnic marriages “depends on what nationalities the future spouses are”. Around 3 % are strongly against such an experience and almost 4 % generally do not approve this practice. Most of the Russians surveyed (29 respondents), gave the answers “I generally approve this experience” and “I fully support this practice of organizing family life” and 8 Russians, deviated from the answer to this question.

Answering the question whether the financial situation of spouses and their families, affects the formation of an interethnic family, almost 32 % of respondents from Iran and 16 Russians agree that this is a very “important factor”, 50 % of Iranians and 18 Russians admit that is relatively an important factor, and the rest found it difficult to answer or they believe that financial situation is not an important factor.

Almost 32 % of the respondents from Iran answered that families, friends, and relatives influence on cross-cultural marriage, 35.6 % answered that they are “relatively influencing”. 26 % of the respondents noted that they had no influence at all, and 6.7 % found it difficult to answer. 25, Russian respondents answered “influences”, 19 people, answered, “relatively influences”. It can be concluded that while respondents need support from family and friends to enter interethnic marriage, there are people who act more independently of the opinions of families and friends.

When assessing the problems and advantages of interethnic marriages, a quarter of Iranians (24.8 %) and 15 Russians, do not see any distinctive problems in intercultural marriage compared to ordinary marriage. Approximately one in five respondents from Iran note the role of misunderstanding from society, loved ones, and the spouses themselves as one of the problems. Almost 18 % believe that it is difficult to build relationships for spouses of representatives of different cultures. From the responses of the Russians, can be assumed that they are less likely to pay attention to the role of misunderstanding of interethnic marriages from the society and the loved ones (only 5 people,) as a problem of such family formation. The opinion that interethnic marriages do not have any special differences from others, 41.9 % of Iranians and 15 Russians, believe “the positive side of all marriages is the same – the birth of a new family”. Almost 25 % of Iranians and 15 Russians, believe that interethnic marriages are characterized by “traditional richness of family life”, 22 % of Iranians and 8 Russians believe that it is in interethnic marriages that “the most gifted and beautiful children” are born.

Features of interethnic marriages. Among the Iranian interviewees who were in cross-cultural marriages, more often at the beginning of the relationship they felt dislike or rejection towards themselves in the family of their spouse, but then the



dislike passed (3 people, out of 4 who answered this question). 3 Russians answered that they felt dislike only at the beginning of the relationship, 1 respondent, believes that the dislike has remained until now, and five respondents gave a categorical answer “there were no rejection at all”.

To answer the question “Have you encountered misunderstanding or not sharing your choice in your family when choosing your partner in an interethnic marriage?”, Out of 14 people, only 2 answered that “there is still a lack of understanding”. The rest, covering the history of their marriage, argue that there was no misunderstanding or conflicts over the choice of a spouse, or they quickly passed. The data obtained show that interethnic marriage is perceived positively in most cases by both the husband’s and wife’s families.

Formation of a strategy for raising children, considering the belonging of their parents to different ethnic groups is an important aspect in interethnic families. In this context out of 4 Iranian respondents, 3 answered “religion does not play a significant role in raising children in our family”. This opinion is shared by 4 out of 9 Russian respondents. Six respondents from Russia noted that their children learn the languages of both parents, one answered that “children learn only the language of the countries where they live” and one chose the answer “plan to teach children a second language in the future”. Three Iranian respondents also chose the answer “we plan to teach children a second language in the future”. It can be assumed that most of the parents in interethnic families respect the language of the spouse(s) as an element of culture and prefer that the children in their families grow up bilingual which gives certain advantages in society, education, and future profession.

Reproductive orientations. In conditions of low fertility and global trends of its decline, the assessment of the reproductive potential of families is very relevant. Answering the question about the desired number of children, most of the respondents noted 2 children (57 %), 3 children (20 %) one child (13 %), no child (6 %), 4 children (2 %), 5 children and more (1 %) and hard to say (1 %). The average number of children for respondents from Iran was 2.03 children, for Russians 2.29 children. Most of the Russian respondents would like to have 2–3 children (33 people). The respondents were also asked the question: “If you would like to have more than 3 children, then why?”. The answer: “I love it when there are many children in the house” (19 Iranians and 12 Russians) was chosen the most, following by the answer “many children will support us in old age” (6 and 4 people, respectively). Almost no one points out the importance of the traditions “to have many children is a tradition in our society” or “to have many children is prescribed by religion”, “advice from a spouse and relatives”. It can be reasonably assumed that the indicator of the desired number of children is influenced by the number of children in the families of the respondents. The study showed that most of the Iranian respondents (82 %) grew up in families with 2 or more children. The families of the Russian respondents were smaller, one-child families are more common (13 people out of 48 gave this answer).



Discussion and Conclusion. To conclude, Iranian and Russian respondents indicated different strategies and answers in the field of family formation. We can find both supporters of the traditional model of family relations and the modern model of the family. On the one hand, they deny the material motive for marriage, but they believe that the financial situation of the parties affects the creation of an interethnic marriage. Perhaps, in the latter case, we are talking about the perception of the homogeneity of spouses in terms of material well-being as a condition for a successful marriage.

The study revealed a rather friendly attitude towards interethnic marriages in both countries. Perhaps the results were influenced by the fact that the survey was conducted among urban residents with a predominantly higher education. Intercultural marriages are quite common, especially in Russian society. A significant part of the respondents answered that around them, there are persons who are in interethnic marriages. And most of the respondents themselves could marry a representative of another ethnic group professing a different religion. The respondents believe that the people around them have a positive attitude towards interethnic marriages, and, when it comes to their personal experience, the attitude of relatives and friends was mostly benevolent from the very beginning or changed to benevolent rather quickly. However, some of the respondents note the problems arising in interethnic marriages associated with misunderstanding and rejection.

It is worth noting there are significant differences in the age structure of respondents from Iran and Russia: the average age of respondents in Iran was 23.9 years, in Russia – 34.1 years, sample structure by age varies considerably across countries. This affected, to a certain extent, the differences in the answers, specially, on the characteristics of the flows of mutual assistance with the parental family.

Among the respondents from the two countries one can find both supporters of the traditional model of family relations and the modern model of the family.

There is some contradiction in the answers of the respondents: on the one hand, they deny the material motive for marriage, but they believe that the financial situation of the parties affects the creation of an interethnic marriage. Perhaps, in the latter case, we are talking about the perception of the homogeneity of spouses in terms of the level of material well-being as a condition for a successful marriage.

The study revealed a rather friendly attitude towards inter-ethnic marriages in both countries. Perhaps the results were influenced by the fact that the survey was conducted among urban residents with a predominantly higher education.

Intercultural marriages are quite common, especially in Russian society. A significant part of the respondents answered that there are persons in inter-ethnic marriages among their entourage. And most of the respondents themselves could marry a representative of another ethnic group professing a different religion. The respondents believe that their environment also has a positive attitude towards interethnic marriages, and, when it comes to their personal experience, the attitude of relatives and friends was mostly benevolent from the very beginning or changed



to benevolent rather quickly. However, some of the respondents note the problems arising in interethnic marriages associated with misunderstanding and rejection.

The study's findings make it possible to eliminate specific information gaps in the context of attitudes towards cross-cultural marriages and ideas about the desired family models. The results obtained will help form a family policy strategy and support cross-cultural marriages in Russia and Iran, and other countries distinguished by cultural diversity. Among the subjects of such a policy, vocational education institutions are the most important. The study made it possible to outline other ways of collecting empirical data to obtain more representative and detailed estimates. It is necessary to conduct a study covering more people in inter-ethnic marriage living in Iran and Russia. It is also advisable to conduct a study in the control group among persons, not in interethnic marriages, which allows us to reveal the specifics of the interethnic marriages more correctly. It is worth paying attention to the possibilities of ethnic communities to form the sample population. The study showed a significant differentiation in the answers of both Iranian and Russian respondents, indicating a variety of strategies in the field of family formation.

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M. Afzali – review of international experience; data collection and evidence; visualization/presentation of data in the text; revision of the text.

E. A. Irsetskaya – review of international experience; formalized data analysis.

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