



Golubeva E.V., Istratova O.N.

Diagnostics of Child-Parent Relationship Types

Diagnostics experience of child-parent relationship as per classification by A.V. Petrovskiy (Dictation, Wardship, Noninterference and Cooperation) using Parent Attitude Questionnaire Test (PAQ) by A.Ya. Varga, V.V. Stolin is presented in the article. Criteria for correlating child-parent relationship types as per A.V.Petrovskiy with PAQ scales characteristics developed by the authors of the article are submitted. Proportions of child-parent relationship types employed by present-day parents of junior schoolchildren are studied.

Key words: *child-parent relationship types, methods for diagnostics of child-parent relationship types.*

Childhood as a significant and important period of human life is the object of interest of researchers in many different fields of science. Family and the system of intra-family and child-parent relationships play an important role in child development and shaping of personality.

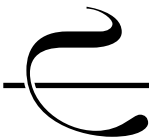
Present-day family is involved in various aspects of social activity and exposed to macrosocial factors. Deep social changes in our country in 1990's could not have left family as the most vulnerable part of social organism unaffected. Those transformations led to appearance of more and more disadvantaged and destructive families in which children are involved in criminal activities and become victims of violence. Seemingly successful families in which child's subjective state can be characterized by continuous emotional traumatizing due to miseducation can also be distressed in terms of conditions created for child development.

When describing psychological problems of children from families with good socioeconomic standing, consulting psychologists G.V. Burmenskaya, O.A. Karabanova note that "it is more and more often in the consulting practice that the lengths of family communication get shorter and their contents get poorer, there is lack of warmth, advertence to each other, and truly joint forms of useful activity of children together with adults or general leisure are disappearing. Personal and cognitive communication is ever more replaced with its narrow pragmatic forms, such as matters of custom, regime, control of progress at school, while rewards reduce to material forms" [2, 12].

Thus, the problem of child-parent relationships, which has been vital throughout the entire development of psychological science and practice, remains topical even in the current stage.

Many authors (A.Ya. Varga, A.I. Zakharov, R.A. Zachepitskiy, P.F. Lesgaft, A.S. Makarenko, V.N. Myasishev, A.V. Petrovskiy, M. Ratter, V.V. Stolin, V.V. Yustitskiy, etc.) had attempted all-round studies of child-parent relationships and identified the features of pathogenic types of education leading to emotional disturbances in children.

So, A.Ya. Varga understands parent attitude as an integral system of parent's feelings towards his or her child, i.e. the specifics of how parent perceives and understands



child's character and deeds, and the behavioral stereotypes practiced by parent in his or her communication with the child.

In her study of the structure of parent attitude, A.Ya. Varga bases herself on a dynamic two-factor model of parent attitude proposed by E. Schefer and R. Bell, the main factors of which are emotional (love/hate or admission/repulsion) and behavioral (autonomy/control).

A.Ya. Varga identified the following components of parent attitude: integral admission/repulsion of child by parents that defines the cognitive component; interpersonal distance that defines how emotionally close the parent is to his or her child and characterizes the emotional component; form and direction of control over child's behavior that defines the behavioral component.

In this connection A.Ya. Varga suggested that the parent attitude types are to be viewed as established patterns of parent interaction with children that are defined by various combinations of said components: cognitive, emotional and behavioral. She distinguished the following four types of inefficient parent attitude structures, as observed in parents who fail in education of their children: admmissive-authoritarian, repulsive with infantilization and social disabling, symbiotic, symbiotic-authoritarian [3]. On the basis of the above-mentioned statements she designed jointly with V.V. Stolin a method for diagnostics of parent position towards child – a Parent Attitude Questionnaire (PAQ).

A total of 61 questions in the method comprises five scales as follows that represent particular aspects of parent attitude.

1. Repulsion. This scale represents the overall emotionally negative (repulsion) or positive (admission) attitude to child.

2. Cooperation. This scale represents how parents endeavor to cooperate with child, show sincere interest and concern about child's affairs.

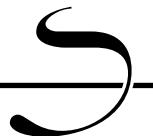
3. Symbiosis. The questions of this scale are aimed at finding out whether parents strive to reach unity with child or, conversely, try to keep a psychological distance between themselves and child. This represents a sort of contactness between child and adult.

4. Authoritarian Hypersocialization. This scale characterizes how child's behavior is controlled by adults, whether they treat him liberally or authoritarily.

5. Infantilization. This scale shows adults' attitude to child's abilities and talents, strengths and weaknesses, successes and failures.

High, medium or low score can be achieved in any of the five scales. High score indicates a high degree of development of respective parent attitude aspect, while low score indicates a relatively low degree of development [4].

Both the above and most of other parent attitude type classifications, while fully meeting the demands of psychological service, are aimed primarily at pathogenic scenarios and do not deal with "favorable" ones. The Questionnaire designed by A.Ya. Varga, V.V. Stolin includes the Cooperation scale that represents adult's willingness to cooperate with child, but this scale is not involved in the identification of parent attitude structure types.



From this point of view the more complete is the child-parent relationships typology by A.V. Petrovskiy [6], [5], who identified four family education tactics and the relevant four types of child-parent relationships that are both prerequisite thereto and resultant therefrom: Dictation, Wardship, Nonintervention and Cooperation.

Family dictation manifests in systematic suppression by one family members (mostly adults) of initiative and self-esteem of other members.

Parents may and should make demands of their children judging from educational goals, moral norms, particular situations. But acting in the form of orders and violence encounters child's resistance. Children in such cases may react in outbreaks of roughness, lie, hypocrisy. If child's resistance is ever broken, then "many valuable personality qualities are broken together with it: self-dependence, self-esteem, initiative, faith in himself or herself and in his or her abilities" [6, p. 105].

Family wardship is a system of relations in which parents, who work to satisfy all demands of child, protect him or her from all concerns, troubles and efforts by assuming them on themselves.

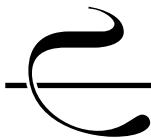
While the essence of Dictation and Wardship is different, the fruits are the same: children lack self-dependence, initiative, they are suspended from dealing with matters concerning them personally and the family.

Adverse consequences of Wardship as a family education tactics are that the priority is given to satisfying child's demands and protecting him or her from troubles, not to forming his or her personality. "Wardship as an education tactics is a plain adversary of labor education because the ward is primarily protected from efforts and responsibility" – A.V. Petrovskiy wrote [6, p. 106]. Children brought up in hyper-wardship environment turn out to be unadapted to adult life, incapable of personal and collective responsibility. If parents reduce wardship over child to a reasonable minimum from the earliest childhood by controlling only the basic aspects of education (health, morality, etc.) and providing child with independence and responsibility in handling everyday issues, then by doing so they promote the formation of ripe personality in the child.

Nonintervention is a system of interpersonal relations in family based on accepting the possibility and even advisability of independent coexistence of adults and children. "It is not uncommon that apartness of the worlds of children and adults is declared literally: let the child grow self-sufficient, independent, unselfconscious and free" – A.V. Petrovskiy noted [6, p. 107]. In this case parents evade educational functions, children do not feel themselves part of a family, do not share the joys and hardships of relatives [7]. When need arises, the children turn out to be incapable of involvement in common family problems.

Cooperation as a type of family relationships assumes mediacy of interpersonal relations through common goals and objectives of joint activity, its organization and high moral values.

A family dominated by Cooperative type of relationships becomes a group with high level of development – a collective. Such type of relationships is optimal for accomplishing the goals of morally warranted education as opposed to Dictation, Wardship and Nonintervention.



Fair allocation of daily duties among parents and children, adequate assignment of responsibility for successes and failures in the joint activities of family members are characteristic for such families. The most important characteristic of families with Cooperative type of relationships is cohesion as a display of value-orientational unity.

Current foreign and domestic psychology accumulates a significant experience of child-parent relationship diagnostics. So, based on hands-on experience, consulting psychologists G.V. Burmenskaya, O.A. Karabanova recommend the following methods [1, 2], for diagnostics of interpersonal relationships established in family.

A. For children:

- 1) Drawing-Family Techniques and modifications;
- 2) Adapted version of "Le Test-Film, René Gille";
- 3) Various versions of Incomplete Sentences method;
- 4) Modification of evaluative self-assessment method;
- 5) Children's Apperceptive Story-Telling Test;
- 6) Personal Sphere Model method;
- 7) Bene-Anthony Family Relations Test (Child version).

B. For parents:

- 8) Parent behavior style questionnaire (Eudemiller);
- 9) Anamnestic questionnaire;
- 10) Parent's composition Life History of My Child;
- 11) Parent attitude questionnaire by Varga-Stolin.

C. For children and parents alternatively:

12) Version of self-assessment method when, for example, parents assess the child and assess for the child and then the difference of the assessment against that made by the child himself or herself is discussed, and vice versa;

13) Questionnaire for study of interaction between parents and children by I. Markovskaya.

D. For child-parent dyad:

14) Variations of joint activity test generally known as Structural Architect, wherein child and parent try, for example, to describe a rather complex picture not visible to either partner verbally in a dialog so that the partner could accurately reproduce it.

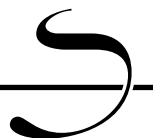
E. Equally suitable for children and adults:

- 15) Etkind Color Attitudes Test.

Also there are other known methods for diagnostics of interpersonal relationships in family. Despite the considerable number of methodical tools available to psychologists, there is still a certain need in methods for diagnostics of child-parent relationships.

One problem of diagnostics of child-parent relationships encountered by research psychologists is that they have to give a full, capacious, yet short characteristics of the child-parent relationship profiles being diagnosed. Such characteristics should include not only pathogenic (such as in classification of inharmonious education types by Eudemiller, Yustitskiy), but also "favorable" scenarios.

The typology of child-parent relationships by A.V. Petrovskiy given above fully



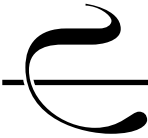
meets these requirements. But it is associated with certain methodic complications: known studies provide no method to find out which type of child-parent relationships according to A.V. Petrovskiy's classification dominates in a family.

One possible way to solve this problem may be to develop criteria for correlating the Dictatorial, Warding, Noninterfering and Cooperative types of child-parent relationships with scale characteristics of any well-known and widely used method of child-parent relationship diagnostics. As one such method, we have chosen the Parent Attitude Questionnaire (PAQ) by A.Ya. Varga, V.V. Stolin. Not seeing it possible to "update" the theoretical statements which the Questionnaire is based upon or "adjust" the specifics of interpretation of the results that could be obtained from using it, we chose this reliable and widely used diagnostics tool for empirical study of how different types of child-parent relationships according to A.V. Petrovskiy are expressed in present-day families. This typology makes it possible to identify the optimal type of child-parent relationships by diagnosing it not just as "absence of features causing pathological changes in child's personality", but as a type of relationship that has characteristics (quite well-defined) facilitating the accomplishment of goals of morally-oriented education. E.O. Smirnova and M.V. Bykova noted that despite the variety of terms and concepts, it appears from almost all approaches that parent attitude includes two opposite aspects: unconditional (which includes components such as admission, love, empathy, etc.) and conditional (objective assessment, control, direction towards development of certain qualities)" [8]. Taking into account some commonness of different typologies of child-parent relationships, we have developed criteria for correlating parents' results in PAQ test with the child-parent relationship type employed by the parents (see Table 1). Bolded is the test score that governs the identification of a particular child-parent relationship type.

Table 1

Diagnosics of child-parent relationship type

Child-parent relationship	Score according to questionnaire of parent attitude to child				
	<i>I</i> <i>Repulsion</i>	<i>II</i> <i>Cooperation</i>	<i>III</i> <i>Symbiosis</i>	<i>IV</i> <i>Authoritarian Hypersocialization</i>	<i>V</i> <i>Infantilization</i>
<i>Dictation</i>	high, medium	medium, low	medium, low	high	high, medium, low
<i>Wardship</i>	medium, low	medium, low	high	high, medium, low	high medium
<i>Noninterference</i>	high, medium, low	medium, low	low	low	medium, low
<i>Cooperation</i>	medium, low	high	medium, low	medium, low	medium, low



As appears from the Table, the identification of Dictatorial type of child-parent relationships is governed by high score in Authoritarian Hypersocialization indicating that parent is too authoritarian towards his or her child, requiring unconditional obedience of him and setting tight disciplinary limits. The parent forces his or her will on child almost in everything. Dictator parent cannot get high score in Cooperation and Symbiosis and low score in Repulsion because the Dictatorial type of child-parent relationships eliminates the relations of equality and assumes certain psychological distance between parent and child. In the identification of Dictatorial type of relationships the score in Infantilization can be either high (child is taken as a silly being) or medium or low (child's personality and abilities are adequately perceived).

The identification of Warding type of relationships is governed by high score in Symbiosis: adult always tries to be closer to child, satisfy his or her demands, protect from troubles and efforts. Parents employing Warding relationships have medium or low score in Repulsion because they have positive or neutral attitude towards their children, assume tender care and concern. Immoderate parental care manifests through its clear inadequacy to age specifics of child and eliminates showing of responsibility and initiative by child when dealing with matters concerning him or her personally, and the more so, family in general. Therefore, such parents have high or medium score in Infantilization and low or medium score in Cooperation. Score in Authoritarian Hypersocialization can be either high (unconditional suppression of child's attempts at showing independence) or medium or low (education according to "little godling" type).

Noninterfering type of relationships is primarily characterized by absence of parental control even in such matters as school progress, participation in labor activities within child's capacities, compliance with moral norms. Therefore, parents employing such type of relationships have low score in Authoritarian Hypersocialization. Further, this type of child-parent relationships is characterized by considerable psychological distance between parent and child, apartness of the worlds of children and adults. Such characteristics of child-parent relationships are reflected in parents' low score in Symbiosis. Relatives' life and concerns remain restricted for child, and similarly, child's hardships and joys remain out of parents' view. Children can grow incapable of joint handling of problems, cooperation even when it is critical. Hence, parents get low or medium score in Cooperation. Parent's will to make his or her child grow self-sufficient, independent, unselfconscious is reflected in low or medium score in Infantilization. In the identification of Noninterfering type of relationships, score in Repulsion can be either high (positive attitude to child, respect and acknowledgement of his or her individuality) or medium or low (negative feelings towards child: irritation, anger, annoyance).

The identification of Cooperative type of child-parent relationships is governed by high score in Cooperation (in this case the names of child-parent relationship type and questionnaire scale are synonymic). Parents employing this type of child-parent relationships cannot get high score in Repulsion, Symbiosis, Authoritarian Hyperso-



cialization or Infantilization. This is due to the following characteristics of this type of child-parent relationships: positive emotional attitude towards child, promotion of independence and self-sufficiency in child, reduction of control over his or her actions to a reasonable minimum, adequate perception of his or her age and personality features.

The most controversial issue from the theoretical point of view is correlation of Cooperative type of child-parent relationships and Cooperation scale of PAQ test. In our opinion, the statements related to Cooperation scale: *"I take a lot of interest in the life of my child"*, *"I always take part in child's games and activities"*, characterize the mediacy of interpersonal relations in family through goals of joint activity of child and parent. When parents agree with the statements: *"Parents should not just demand from child, but should adapt themselves to him or her, treat him or her with respect, as a personality"*, *"I often see that child's demands and claims are correct in their own way"*, etc., they express their readiness to proceed from a single moral norm (treat themselves as others, others as themselves) when making demands of their children. The statement that *"Children learn early parents can be mistaken"* reflects adequate assignment of responsibility for failures in joint activities of family members. Hence, the questions in Cooperation scale reflect the basic characteristics of Cooperative type of child-parent relationships. One essential feature of Cooperation as a child-parent relationship type is cohesion, which is understood by A.V. Petrovskiy as a characteristic of the system of intragroup relations that shows how aligned are the assessments, attitudes and positions within the group towards objects (persons, goals, ideas, events) that are most important for the group in general [6]. As we see it, the statement that *"Child's opinion should be considered in making family decisions"* and other statements of the Cooperation scale characterize such features of child-parent relationship structure that *promote* the development of a tendency in child's personality to see his or her family as a provider of value system.

It should be noted that in some cases the type of child-parent relationships cannot be unambiguously identified. If parent gets high test score in several scales that govern different types of child-parent relationships, then the relationship type is mixed. If the score is medium in all scales of the Questionnaire, this indicates an unstable type of child-parent relationships that may be due to immature parental position or educational uncertainty in younger parents.

We have tried to study current correlation of child-parent relationship types in families with junior schoolchildren. Type of child-parent relationships was diagnosed using PAQ test by A.Ya. Varga, V.V. Stolin. Parents' results in PAQ test were correlated with child-parent relationship types using the criteria identified by us.

Test subjects were parents of 102 children in the age between 7 and 8, pupils of 2nd classes of a school in Taganrog.

The data acquired from PAQ test was presented as a bar chart. Scales of the Questionnaire were plotted on the X-axis and percentages of test subjects with low, medium and high score in the respective scales were plotted on the Y-axis.

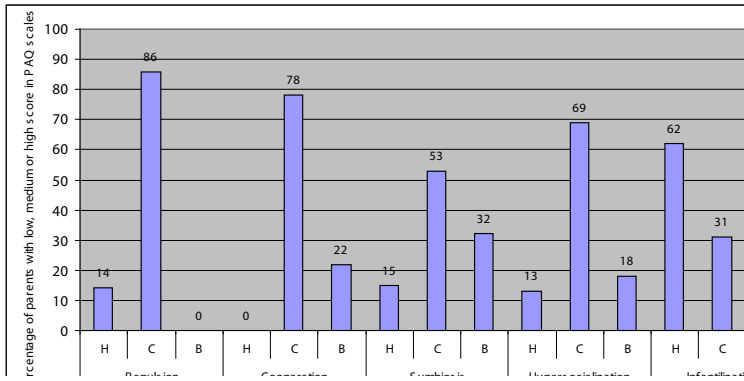
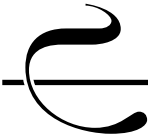


Figure 1. Parents' scores in PAQ test

In general, most parents had medium score in Repulsion, Cooperation, Symbiosis and Hypersocialization scales, which evidences medium expression of these aspects of parents' attitude to children. Most parents had low score in Infantilization, indicating that they treat their children in accordance with their age, respect children's thoughts and feelings.

Analysis of parents' PAQ results against the criteria given in Table 1 showed that in 30 cases the type of child-parent relationships was either mixed (high test score in more than one scale evidenced more than one relationship type at the same time) or unstable (medium score in all scales of the Questionnaire) or contradictory, when fathers' and mothers' types did not match. In 72 cases it was possible to identify the particular type of child-parent relationships:

- a) Dictation in 16 cases;
- b) Wardship in 23 cases;
- c) Noninterference in 4 cases;
- d) Cooperation in 29 cases.

The data was represented as a pie chart:

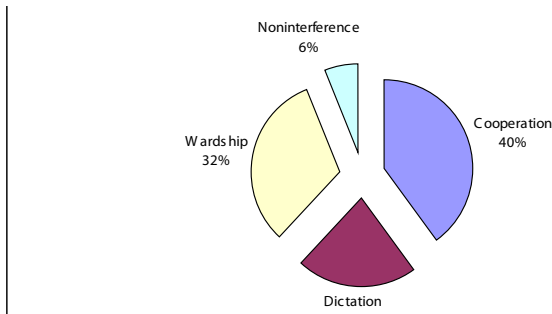


Figure 2. Proportions of child-parent relationship types



The results of the study showed that the most common types of child-parent relationships in families were Cooperation and Wardship.

Thus, our study represents an experience of reduction of multiple aspects of child-parent relationships (high, medium or low level of child repulsion in family, etc. in other four characteristics) to a single type of child-parent relationships as per classification by A.V. Petrovskiy: Dictation, Wardship, Noninterference and Cooperation.

Practicing psychologists, having the information on the type of child-parent relationships in a family, can forecast child's most likely further personal development, since the impact of particular child-parent relationship type (including the optimal Cooperative type) on the development of child's personality and character has been described by A.V. Petrovskiy well enough. Research psychologists, having correlated the results of PAQ testing of a parent with one of child-parent relationship types, will be able to operate short yet capacious characteristics in the research purposes (for example, for joining test subjects into groups by child-parent relationship types).

The Literature

1. Burmenskaya G.V. Psychological Examination of Preschool and Junior School Children – Moscow: UMC Psychology, 2003.
2. Burmenskaya G.V., Karabanova O.A. et al. Age-Psychological Approach in Consulting Children and Teenagers – Moscow: Academy, 2002.
3. Varga A.Ya. Structure and Types of Parent Attitude: Synopsis of candidate thesis – Moscow, 1986.
4. Ovcharova R.V. School Psychologist's Handbook. – Moscow: Education, Educational Literature, 1996.
5. Petrovskiy A., Petrovskiy V. Are Parents Always Right? Educational Psychology – Moscow: AST Publishing, 2003.
6. Petrovskiy A.V., Yaroshevskiy M.G. Psychology. – Moscow: Academy, 2002.
7. Petrovskiy V.A., Poleyaya M.V. Alienation as Phenomenon of Child-Parent Relationships // Psychological Matters. – 2001. – No. 1.
8. Smirnova E.O., Bykova M.V. Experience of Study of Structure and Dynamics of Parent Attitude // Psychological Matters. – 2000, No. 3.