

**EDUCATIONAL ANALYSIS OF LONELINESS AND OLD AGE IN THE SURVIVAL PRACTICES OF KAZAN BOURGEOIS WOMEN (LATE 18TH - FIRST HALF OF THE 19TH CENTURIES)**

***ANÁLISE EDUCACIONAL DA SOLIDÃO E VELHICE NAS PRÁTICAS DE SOBREVIVÊNCIA DE MULHERES BURGUESAS DE KAZAN (FIM DO SÉCULO XVIII - PRIMEIRA METADE DO SÉCULO XIX)***

***ANÁLISIS EDUCATIVO DE LA SOLEDAD Y LA VEJEZ EN LAS PRÁCTICAS DE SUPERVIVENCIA DE LA MUJER BURGUESA EN KAZAN (FINAL DEL SIGLO XVIII - PRIMERA MITAD DEL SIGLO XIX)***

Tatyana Victorovna BESSONOVA<sup>1</sup>  
Nikolaeva Valentina ALEXANDROVNA<sup>2</sup>

**ABSTRACT:** The article is devoted to educational analysis of the everyday life practices of bourgeois widows – one of the most socially vulnerable categories of the urban population. Using various sources, many of which have been first introduced into scholarly discourse, various ways of surviving widows are shown by way of the example of the petty bourgeoisie of Kazan, a large provincial city of the Russian Empire. The micro historical approach to the study made it possible to identify the educational and literary aspects, social feeling and sentiment of this category of Russian townswomen. In light of this, the key role of family in matters of social care which strengthened the subjection of women in society during the considered period was revealed. On the other hand, the necessity to keep themselves, to manage their estate, encouraged women to intense activity, made them more independent and self-reliant, which had been gradually destroying patriarchal stereotypes in gender relations.

**KEYWORDS:** Bourgeois widows. Educational analysis. Everyday routine. Literary aspects. Survival practices.

**RESUMO:** O artigo se dedica à análise educacional das práticas cotidianas das viúvas burguesas – uma das categorias mais socialmente vulneráveis da população urbana. Usando várias fontes, muitas das quais foram introduzidas pela primeira vez no discurso acadêmico, várias formas de sobrevivência das viúvas são mostradas por meio do exemplo da pequena burguesia de Kazan, uma grande cidade provincial do Império Russo. A abordagem micro histórica do estudo possibilitou identificar os aspectos educacionais e literários, o sentimento social e o sentimento dessa categoria de cidadinas russas. Diante disso, revelou-se o papel fundamental da família nas questões do cuidado social que fortaleceu a sujeição da mulher na sociedade no período considerado. Por outro lado, a necessidade de se manter, de administrar seu patrimônio, estimulou as mulheres a uma intensa atividade e as tornou mais independentes

<sup>1</sup> Kazan Federal University, Kazan – Russia. Associate Professor (Department of Social Sciences and Humanities). ORCID: <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-4808-0025>. E-mail: [bessonovatv@list.ru](mailto:bessonovatv@list.ru)

<sup>2</sup> Kazan Federal University, Kazan – Russia. Leading specialist (Preparatory Department). ORCID: <https://orcid.org/0000-0003-2113-4019>. E-mail: [valentinka.n@mail.ru](mailto:valentinka.n@mail.ru)

*e autoconfiantes, o que foi gradualmente destruindo os estereótipos patriarcais nas relações de gênero.*

**PALAVRAS-CHAVE:** *Viúvas burguesas. Análise educacional. Cotidiano. Aspectos literários. Práticas de sobrevivência.*

**RESUMEN:** *El artículo está dedicado al análisis educativo de las prácticas cotidianas de las viudas burguesas, una de las categorías socialmente más vulnerables de la población urbana. Utilizando varias fuentes, muchas de las cuales se introdujeron por primera vez en el discurso académico, se muestran diversas formas de supervivencia de la viuda a través del ejemplo de la pequeña burguesía de Kazan, una gran ciudad provincial del Imperio Ruso. El enfoque microhistórico del estudio permitió identificar los aspectos educativos y literarios, el sentimiento social y el sentimiento de esta categoría de mujeres de la ciudad rusa. Frente a ello, se reveló el papel fundamental de la familia en las cuestiones del cuidado social, lo que fortaleció la sujeción de la mujer en la sociedad en el período considerado. Por otra parte, la necesidad de mantenerse, de administrar su patrimonio, estimuló a las mujeres a una intensa actividad y las hizo más independientes y seguras de sí mismas, lo que fue destruyendo paulatinamente los estereotipos patriarcales en las relaciones de género.*

**PALABRAS CLAVE:** *Viudas burguesas. Análisis educativo. Rutina diaria. Aspectos literarios. Práticas de supervivencia.*

## Introduction

Man usually lives a family life. The family is a dynamic organization that goes through various stages in its development, determined by the stages of life journey. From the demographic point of view, the path of human life consists of qualitatively separate stages of life, which are determined by age, a set of social roles, and a way of life. A person's life is divided into pre-working, working and post-working stages.

During the first stage, a person only gets from society, during the second stage of their activity, a person, creating material and spiritual values, gives society more than they take.... After the work activity has ended, the third stage in life begins: the period of "consumption without production" begins again" (URLANIS, 1968).

At each of these periods of life, there is a philistine built strategy of behavior, relying on practices being an external expression of their consolidation with their social environment.

The system of acquired strong predispositions, produced by a real social situation, is termed by P. Bourdieu as "*habitus*", which produces individual and collective practices through the active presence of past experience, perceived in a social environment as a norm (CONTEMPORARY..., 1995). However, within these norms, the variation of claims of people

is manifested, hence, the reconstruction of the everyday life of the Kazan petty bourgeoisie should be carried out not only through defining the models of behavior to be traditional for the bourgeois self-awareness, but also taking the internal social ranking into consideration.

A station in the social hierarchy is determined by a set of conditions designated by P. Bourdieu as capital – a resource potential that allows people achieving their desired goals at different rates (BOURDIEU, 2007). The quality of capital – economic, cultural, social symbolic - depends, inter alia, on age stages and individual life situations in them. Situations of human insecurity, giving rise to specific ways of adapting and practicing survival: orphanage, loneliness, widowhood, old age, poverty, had especially noticeable influence on the way of life of the bourgeoisie.

Bringing the historical experience as an educational experience, learning from the past, in order to have a possibility of improvement and understanding of how specific and fragile sectors of society developed, is a relevant experience within education. Knowledge of the past allows us to better understand the reason for the present and to think about a better future. Thus, the analysis of a vulnerable layer of the population proposed here becomes a valuable source of educational experience that allows a better understanding not only of the society of the past, but also of the current molds under which contemporaneity was formed.

This article is supposed to study the survival strategy of widows, one of the most vulnerable categories among urban inhabitants, using the example of everyday life practices of petty bourgeoisie in Kazan. The study of specific life decisions made by bourgeois widows to ensure their lives allows for the reconstruction of the typical everyday practices adopted among this class, as well as the peculiarities of women status among urban inhabitants.

## **Methods**

The research approach is based on the methods and techniques characteristic of the microhistory and history of everyday life. The micro-historical approach, within the framework of which the bourgeoisie of a particular town in all the variety of real-historical conditions is explored, makes it possible to reconstruct the details that form the social portrait of the bourgeoisie in all the multiplicity of internal hierarchies. The fundamental principle is the raising of each individual to the rank of the acting subject of history (LYUDTKE, 2005). This allows for a different look at the general historical context of the era, and the exploration of everyday practices allows for the identification of social relations, social sentiments and feeling of representatives of different categories within the bourgeoisie. The exploration of the survival

practices of bourgeois widows is also connected with gender history, which has a broad experience in studying women of different eras and different social strata. Women's story began as a restoration of justice, as women should be visible in history (BRIDENTHAL, 1977). Women of the upper circle who made a more noticeable mark on history are in the limelight of most researchers, while ordinary urban women are much less worthy of the attention of historians. This is explained to a certain extent by practically total lack of sources of personal origin, since the bourgeoisie constituted the lowest stratum of urban inhabitants, whose life was occupied with taking care of their daily necessities of life. The study of the topic is based on indirect data extracted from household schedule of Kazan bourgeoisie, various journals, registers, forensic materials, complaints and petitions kept in the funds of the State Archives of the Republic of Tatarstan.

## Results and Discussion

The first stage of human life cycle is childhood, then the foundation of a family. For the townswomen of the considered era, this was of particular importance, for marriage legitimized the family status, determined the issues of inheritance of property, the social status of children. Marriage served as a proof of their "factor of merit", a prolonged unmarried state after reaching marriageableness was considered as inferiority (BESSONOVA; CHANOVA, 2019). Furthermore, the family was one of the foundations of social capital, providing a woman financial and social security, as well as allowing motherhood, which by the 19th century began to be considered as the most important social function (SCHÜTZE, 1986).

However, for a significant part of the bourgeoisie, the marriage status was short, every fifth family in an average Russian city was headed by a widow mother (PUSHKAREVA, 1997). The fate of the widows was complex and controversial. Many, having been widowed, remained with young children in their care, who had to be raised, given a profession, girls were to be married off. So, Agrafena Andreeva the widow aged 37, after the death of her husband, had 3 sons and two daughters from 12 to 2 years old in her charge (State Archive of the Republic of Tatarstan). Even more difficulties had Avdotya Dmitrieva. As a widow at 42, she raised 5 daughters from 17 to 4 years old (State Archive of the Republic of Tatarstan).

Since women had the right to own and dispose of property separate from their husbands, those widows who had their own house and sufficient households to live independently of their relatives turned to be in the most prosperous position. Often a widow continued her husband's business. So, Fyodor Rybnikov bequeathed all property to his wife, including his house and his

other commercial establishments (SART. F. 12. Op. 24. D.14). Sources indicate that widows used all kinds of means to ensure their sustenance. The widows huckstered, knitted stockings for sale, sold vegetables from their own gardens in summer, many were hired as servants. About a fifth of the townspeople were homeowners, and rooming was a popular practice. So, bourgeoisie Sirokina, the owner of a wooden two-storied house of four rooms, rented three of them each for 6 rubles a year (SART. F. 114. Op. 1. D. 533.).

Little by little the children grew up and separated, the widows faced loneliness. The children or closest living relatives were burdened with caring for single women. Widows often lived in the families of their adult sons, for the law obliged children, even after separation, to take care of their parents. So, Abramova Marya at her 51 lived in the family of her son Larion with his wife and one-year-old daughter. Widows-in-law often lived in the families of relatives. Kozmin Ivan with his wife Anna had supported the 52-year-old widow, daughter-in-law Fyodora Sevostyanova for 20 years (State Archive of the Republic of Tatarstan).

Charity issues rested on the shoulders of families and relatives, which was often accompanied by conflicts. An increase in the number of conflicts between parents and children of unprivileged classes was mentioned by N. L. Pushkareva in her research, linking it with the first manifestations of the crisis of the patriarchal foundations of family organization, the desire of youth for independence (PUSHKAREVA, 2012). Parents often took it to court that the children to provide them with support. Pelageya Petrova brought an action against her son Konstantin to make him support her living, “my son became irreverent about me and “completely left me without charity and even food,” for which court determined the annual maintenance of 100 rubles” (SART. F. 40. Op.1. D.340.).

It was often difficult for a widow to live in her son’s family. Petty bourgeoisie Tokareva complained to the magistrate about her eldest son “Sergei’s chambering, reprimanding his parent with all disobedience and insubordination, giving her a scolding in every possible way, hitting her, throwing her innocently out of the house, and even his wife’s pulling out his property from the house into strange hands”. “Court decision was to send the mother away from the house, obliging her son to allocate 25 rubles a year for her living”, “to abide the consequences and to stave off them in the family” (SART. F. 26. Op.1. D.49.L.).

There were many widows who remained completely alone, they constituted the most vulnerable category in financial and social protection. A widowed woman, even on the street or in a public place, could suffer indecent behavior toward them. G. V. Andreevsky, describing the daily life of Moscow, wrote, “At the end of the 19th century, there were men in Moscow who believed that women who went out of doors without men’s accompanying could be

offended with impunity” (ANDREEVSKY, 2009). Abuse of women was a common practice. Maltsev’s widow “in her poor condition, was taking on kindling wood on the bank of the Kazanka River, which remained after the flood waters”, and tradesman Semyonov kept watch over the firewood on the bank. During the investigation, he explained that in addition to wood chips, Maltseva began to take on the firewood entrusted to him

Semyonov sailed into her, hit her in the face with his fist, she fell, then he violently cudged her – her arms and legs swelled up, her purple spots were examined during the examination. A non-commissioned officer ran up to her screaming, saying that he was beating her “with such passion that he had to restrain him by using force (SART. F.26.D.815).

In the event that there were no relatives ready to take care of lonely elderly widows, the problem was to be solved by the philistine society. The townspeople were almost never placed in old people’s and charity homes. Widow Vasilisa Savelyeva asked, “Having absolutely no livelihood, due to my declining years and poor health, so not only can I not do work, but even walk, and therefore ... put me in an almshouse”. “And I dare to add that, on account of my poor health and poverty, I do not have a place where I could live”. The Kazan police reported in response that, according to the rules, “persons belonging to city and rural societies cannot use placement in an almshouse” (SART. F.115. Op.1. D.1568.). The only way to survive was to live on begging, against which the urban authorities regularly tried to fight. In January 1857, the police detained Kazan bourgeois women, Martha Vasiliev, 69, and Praskovya Stratonov, 50, who had been caught begging. The Duma ordered to oblige “the bourgeois society by all means to provide for these two bourgeois women maintenances, otherwise if they are caught begging alms for the second time, then a fine will be collected from the society” (SART. F.114. Op.1. D.2758).

Having entrusted the bourgeois society with the care for the widowed and most miserable bourgeois, the authorities did not get an expected result. A desperate petition was submitted by widow Nastasya Kononova, for whom the will of the governor was the only hope.

Being in a poor condition and advanced in years, without any relatives, I do not have any shelter, any support, not in the slightest degree, I live on the name of Christ ... I take care of my 5-year-old grandson, but I can’t raise him, and therefore I have to fall down at the feet of Your Excellency and implore in the name of Our Lord Jesus Christ as the mayor of the compassionate father and patron of the miserable to order this baby to be sheltered in an orphanage and thereby make him happy for a lifetime, and to oblige me with eternal gratitude and prayer to the Heavenly Creator to continue the days of life Yours and all your most precious family (SART. F.115. Op.1. D.951).

## Summary

Thus, at the end of the 18th – the first half of the 19th centuries one of the most vulnerable categories among the bourgeoisie were widows, it is no coincidence that the Russian proverb says, “A widow’s lot is to cry to the full”. Widows left with children in their arms had to be reliant on themselves to survive, for that they used all possible means. Women who had their own home, commercial establishment, or petty production were in a more advantageous position. In this case, they were engaged in active economic activities equally to men.

Another group of widows – those who could not provide themselves and lived in the families of their sons and relatives, which caused frequent family conflicts. The most vulnerable group is widowed women who did not have relatives, their own homes, and because of old age or illness could not earn a living. Thus, the issues of charity fell entirely on the family or the philistine society. As a result, on the one hand, women in general and widows, in particular, have traditionally been one of the most disputed groups among townspeople. On the other hand, the need to make their own living, to manage their property, prompted women to active work, made them more independent and all-sufficient, which gradually destroyed patriarchal stereotypes of gender relations.

## Conclusions

At various stages of life, under objective and subjective circumstances, the bourgeois family experienced various collisions. One of the common situations was the widow’s plight which could overtake women even at a relatively early age. A study of the specific life decisions made by bourgeois widows to ensure their lives shows the extremely vulnerable position of most bourgeois widows who depend on relationships with their adult sons or close relatives, on whose shoulders the issues of maintenance and charity fell. It was the family sphere that turned out to be the most emotionally charged, and if, overall, the bourgeois family of pre-reform Kazan largely preserved traditional features and declared patriarchal values, then the family quarrels and scandals developed the deepest crack in the patriarchal foundations of the family organization. Finding themselves in a forced position of the head of the family, women had to be active, not only by earning a livelihood, but also often continuing their husband’s commercial business or craft. Along with the ownership of real estate, this excluded women from their traditional humiliated and dependent situation, laying the foundations for future emancipation. One can agree with N. Z. Davis, who reconstructed the lives of three marginalized European women of the 17th century, deviating from the usual life and finding

themselves on the sidelines. These ladies found themselves in the border space between cultural layers. And they created their own new world (DAVIS, 1999). To a certain extent, philistine widows also found themselves thrown to the outskirts of living space, and they formed their own ego in a struggle for their existence.

**ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS:** The work is performed according to the Russian Government Program of Competitive Growth of Kazan Federal University.

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### How to reference this article

BESSONOVA, T. V.; ALEXANDROVNA, N. V. Educational analysis of loneliness and old age in the survival practices of Kazan bourgeois women (late 18th - first half of the 19th centuries). **Revista on line de Política e Gestão Educacional**, Araraquara, v. 25, n. esp. 6, p. 3438-3447, Dec. 2021. e-ISSN:1519-9029. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.22633/rpge.v25iesp.6.16097>

**Submitted:** 10/04/2021

**Required revisions:** 20/08/2021

**Approved:** 27/11/2021

**Published:** 10/12/2021

**Processing and publication by the Editora Ibero-Americana de Educação.**

Correction, formatting, standardization and translation.

