

## **Qualitative data in population research in Russia**

### Introduction

This paper will describe the using of qualitative methods in the discipline of demography and population studies in the last decade in Russia (especially focus groups and in-depth interviews). It will analyze also how is qualitative research presented and evaluated in Russian demographic literature.

There is a whole layer of the literature, mainly on the foreign languages, devoted to methodology and engineering of qualitative researches (only some of them: Hargie, Saunders and Dickson, 1987; Gillham, 2004; Bryman, 2004; Approaches..., 2004; etc.). In Russian it is also possible to look some authors (Belanovsky, 1991, 1996; Jadov, 1995; Possibilities..., 1997; Dmitrieva, 1998; Antonov, 2005; Kalabikhina, 2004a, 2008).

Possibilities of qualitative sociological methods of research in the population studies are mortgaged in possibilities of use of qualitative researches in the analysis of is social-demographic dynamics, and, first of all, in the analysis of demographic behavior, its motivations, and in the analysis of reactions of households and individuals on measures of a demographic policy. We will short stay on following aspects of adoption of qualitative methods in a demography: kinds of qualitative methods; basic "rules" of data application of methods; abilities of qualitative methods; the complexities arising in the course of use of qualitative methods and possibility of their overcoming; application of qualitative methods in the politician of the population; qualitative data in population researches in Russia.

### Kinds of qualitative methods

Sociological methods of data collection and the information analysis are subdivided into qualitative and quantitative methods. Rigidly formalized ones concern quantitative methods:

1. Questioning (also using by mail, telephone, Internet)
2. Testing
3. Expert interrogation
4. The text Content-analysis
5. The Standardized interview

It is possible to name the last two methods transitive methods as depending on a technique of realization of research they in a greater degree can gravitate either to qualitative, or to quantitative researches. For example, the content-analysis can be carried out with the help open coding when the quantity of certain words is measured, phrases, actions in the text either in a video series, or by means of the latent coding when the researcher describes the latent contents of the text. In the latter case we observe the qualitative content-analysis. For example, the researcher, having read text fragments, can do conclusions about availability of stereotypes, lie level, availability of the negative or discrimination relation to certain social-demographic group – to women, elderly, to migrants. Allocate the pragmatically

content-analysis (classification of statements with an establishment of a relationship of cause and effect), semantic (ordering of symbols, that is measurement of frequency of mentions of object, the object or object description in a context) and psychological (studying emotional statements) (Dmitrieva, 2004: 92).

Following kinds concern qualitative methods:

1. Individual interview
  - a. Oral history
  - b. In-depth interview
  - c. Peer interviews
  - d. Expert interviews
2. Group interview
  - a. Nominal interview
  - b. Delphi group
  - c. Brainstorming
  - d. Focus group
  - e. Pair interviews
3. Observation (supervision)
  - a. Included observation
  - b. Non-included observation
  - c. Social Experiment
4. The Analysis of documents
  - a. The qualitative content-analysis of text
  - b. Analysis of graphs, pictures, etc.

In each type of qualitative research there are the subtypes connected with certain technicians and research objectives. Interview can be conducted not with one the respondent, and with two, for example, if we wish to analyze influence of spouses against each other concerning reproductive or matrimonial installations. The included supervision can be carried out directly not by the researcher, but selected by him/her the trained representatives of the studied environment.

As an example it is possible to result research of the American demographer Susan C. Watkins (2004) in which mechanisms of the local environment in the African community are studied, directed on decrease of risk to catch a HIV-infection, and forms of realization of the alphabet of preventive maintenance of AIDS in which it having selected some inhabitants of village, has suggested them to keep detailed diaries (about 300 diaries at each observer were as a result received) about the mention facts in conversations with the relatives familiar, strangers in public places of all aspects of a theme of a HIV-AIDS. I will result only some plots analyzed by means of similar engineering:

- Knowledge of illness, of methods and probability of infection,
- Knowledge of time before display of symptoms and time till a lethal outcome,
- Knowledge of courses of illness,

- Frequency of presence on funeral of neighbors, relatives and influence of event of funeral on vital behavior,
- Tolerance to matrimonial changes, readiness for divorce of the women who have suspected the husband in contacts to other women, informing of friends on changes of the spouse,
- The relation to sex, sexual behavior, methods of settlement of sexual excitation,
- Use of condoms, in particular, at illegitimate contacts,
- Revival of Christian values (first of all fidelity in spoilage) as protection frames from disease.

#### Basic "rules" of data application of methods

The expediency of application of qualitative researches is obvious in a situation of studying of behavior, motivations, installations and opinions of individuals; for the purpose reconstructions of the situation close to a real life; studying of a new problem for a formulation of hypotheses; studying hidden, deviant behavior. Unlike quantitative methods where the purpose is studying of prevalence of a sign.

Spheres of population data application of methods lie basically within the limits of the analysis of demographic behavior (sexual, matrimonial, reproductive, vital, migratory ones):

- Studying of installations, norms, stereotypes and errors of respondents (reproductive attitudes, norms of vital behavior, gender stereotypes about cast in housekeeping, errors about efficiency and harm of an oral contraceptive method, etc.),
  - Studying of opinions on existing problems (for example, in sphere of consumption of social services),
    - The analysis of motivations and decision-making factors (for example, the decision on distribution of incomes in a household, the decision on a birth of the child, the decision on family formation, the decision on preventive medical examination),
      - Research of intimate behavior (abortions, contraception, sexual behavior),
      - Research deviant behavior (drugs and alcohol consumption, suicide, house violence),
      - The retrospective analysis (clarification and check of the described lines of demographic behavior in the groups inclined to distortion of the information),
    - Studying of political expectations (requirement for social services, possibility to affect demographic behavior of people, reaction of the population to measures of social-demographic policy).

Information distortions in quantitative researches (questioning) can be connected with public morals of certain social groups (for example, dates of such events as the birth of the child and a marriage can be rearranged), with stereotypes and norms of behavior in society (answer automatically, without trying on the situation to a question as it is accepted), with weariness of the respondent (occurs care in type of answer "do not know" or admissions of answers that is rather difficultly supervised in quantitative researches), with misunderstanding of a question or absence due answer.

Let's give an example. In one of Russian research on a question « Would you like to be married (to register the cohabitation) in case of a birth of the child?» 52 % of men and only 30 % of women have answered «yes, I will necessarily register». Figures at first sight the strange. But in our opinion, women

unlike men simply have not understood a question. For them "would like" it is substantially connected with «could». Possibly, initiators of cohabitations are men is more often, women cannot "force" to register them spoilage, even in case of a birth of the child they are not assured that their partner to agree on spoilage registration. Registration of spoilage after a birth of the child from the point of view of the woman depends not only on its desire, but also from behavior of the partner. Men are more independent in acceptance of the given decision.

Other example. The wide-spread thesis about the reasons of putting off of a birth of the child, received as a result of realization of biographical researches of reproductive behavior, is family financial condition (or to all studied population, or to social groups differently by reproductive attitudes). In qualitative research (a method of in-depth interviews), conducted by masters of specialization "Demography" in the spring of 2003, on a question «That prevents to give birth to you to the following child?» the answers connected with an unsatisfactory financial position, arose only in the interview beginning (as an occasion to refuse a birth of the following child, but not as the reason). After probing procedure other causes of a failure (or postponing) births of the following child have been revealed: career of women, training, value of spare time and mobility for men and women, fear for the health, negative experience at a birth of the previous child, desire to lay out money on itself, uncertainty in the partner at decision-making on a birth of the second or third child, etc. (in the given context it is transferred without hierarchy of the reasons).

Qualitative researches, as a rule, remove described distortions on "would" and "could", on occasions and causes.

The most wide-spread kinds of qualitative researches in demography (particularly in Russia): individual interviews, the focus groups, the included supervision.

Principles of realization of qualitative researches should be formulated with reference to a concrete kind as a variety of techniques is very great, so, principles and technicians of realization differ rather essentially. For example, difference of group interviews is from each other connected with the purposes and research methods. So, members of nominal groups can work is isolated and not to pursue a general purposes, being informed only through the interviewer, Delphi groups also can be separated, but aimed at general purposes achievement. These two kinds of groups do not provide use of group dynamics – the powerful instrument of information gathering. The method of brainstorming and a method of focus groups use group dynamics, but the brainstorming method is aimed at achievement of the mutually acceptable decision, a focus group method – on careful collecting of individual decisions, on disorder of individual opinions.

Nevertheless, we will allocate some general principles of realization of qualitative researches:

1. It is kindly to use ethnographic, ethno methodological receptions at all stages of research: from statement of a question, the program of research, a field stage of research to the analytical report. The ethno methodology (unlike positivistic methodology) allows to study deep motivations of ordinary promptings and acts of people to see a problem eyes of the respondent to listen to voices of people, not to impose the opinion. Even the presented results in ethno methodological style can be executed in a realistic

key (a narration on the subject of researches without an open position of the researcher), in "confessionary" style (the narration is supplemented with a private experience and feelings of the researcher) or in an impressionistic key (events are presented in that order, in which they occurred to let know to the reader the unfamiliar world at that that has seen and the researcher) felt. Comparison with impressionism not casually: impressionists did not mix paints, and wrote separate dabs pure, that is observed in the nature, colors, trying to embody mobility and variability of the live world (Dmitrieva, 1998: 39; Possibilities... , 1997: 155).

2. Contact of the researcher and the respondent should pass on not hierarchical, debatable basis, as the certificate of social interaction; special attention to give to debate language.

3. Analysis elements should be included at all stages of research, the self-reflexion of the researcher is obligatory.

4. Whenever possible it is necessary to carry out interpretation of verbal and nonverbal reactions.

5. It is necessary to consider a social context.

#### Abilities ("pluses") of qualitative methods

Let's short underline possibilities of qualitative researches, including, in the analysis of the is social-demographic dynamics, which closely related realizations with principles of similar researches: 1) the social reality is designed in the course of research, 2) it is not present rigidly structured guide of interview, the research program flexible, it is possible to "adjust" it during research, 3) possibility of revision of hypotheses in the course of research, 4) close connections between the researcher and the interviewee, the researcher can be incorporated in the research environment, 5) allows to present "a fan of opinions" that enriches results, 6) it is present "feedback" with research object in the course of the analysis, object there is the subject of the analysis, 6) it is a possibility to receive immediate intermediate results.

#### The complexities arising in the course of use of qualitative methods

The most wide-spread "claim" to qualitative researches is representativeness of research. However it is necessary to notice that principles of realization of qualitative research at all do not assume the problem decision of representativeness. The main purpose of qualitative researches is in search of the non-standard, special, not stereotypic phenomena, opinions, acts, real attitudes; or in the analysis of difficult or latent environment or behavior for the analysis.

The purpose and method of qualitative research leads to special validity of the received data. For example, in the content-analysis validity of the latent coding can be above (reception of new knowledge), but it is less reliable, hardly depends on professionalism of the researcher.

The problem of reliability of the data exists because of a subjectivity high level, in a situation of absence of accurate criteria of information gathering and granting of the analytical report peculiar to qualitative researches.

Absence of accurate criteria of the analysis can lead to incomparability of results of different researchers.

#### Ways of overcoming of the problems

The basic problem of qualitative researches - reliability of the data. We underline once again representativeness for such problem it is not put in similar researches, namely reliability. As the format of the given paper does not assume high-grade discussion on this theme, we will make some remarks on ways of overcoming of problems.

Reliability of study as the result often depends on level of professionalism of the researcher. Professionalism of the research should become a main condition of reliability of qualitative research. Increase of professionalism closely related with an educational level and well-read of the researcher, quantity of the conducted researches, readiness to involve profile experts (psychologists, etc.) to the research, possibility to exchange methodological and methodical experience with colleagues. Hence, development of a databank, methodological seminars of qualitative researches is a way to professionalism increase.

Besides, ways of overcoming of problems of reliability of the qualitative data lie in the constant analysis occurring at all stages of research, in revision of hypotheses and contexts the researcher, in the way of the collection of research materials (audio, record video, etc.), in creation of texts of the analysis of methodology of research with the analysis of arising problems and success etc.

One of possible ways of strengthening of reliability and validity of qualitative (and quantitative) researches is a combination in one research of those and other methods.

Quantitative methods will help to formulate hypotheses, themes for group discussions, the guide of interview, to do social-demographic group and regional "sample" at the stage of realization of qualitative research.

Qualitative methods also can "offer the services" to the quantitative: the formulation and the reformulation of hypotheses, working out answers in the closed questions of questionnaires, correction of language of questions, interpretation of the data and results; deviant the analysis, the analysis of the "latent" processes, destruction of myths and stereotypes, an estimation of political measures objects and subjects of a policy. Insignificant prevalence of such combination today (the quantitative and qualitative data collection and the information analysis) lies as in sphere of delimitation of experts of different directions of researches, and in sphere of high budgets of the combined researches. If we overcome these barriers, quality of the tax and the analysis of the information on society will pass to more high level.

#### Application of qualitative methods in the politician of the population

In the text we already concerned demographic examples of application of qualitative methods. In the given item we will stay on use of the given methods in the politician of the population.

We see possibilities of qualitative researches in this sphere in following directions:

1. To understand household problems of families of different demographic types for possible improvement of quality of life of families by measures of a policy of the population<sup>1</sup>.
2. To study requirements and preferences of members of families in social services of certain types.
3. To analyze true motives of demographic behavior and possibility of its correction, including in the order shifts in valuable orientations in reproductive and vital behavior.

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<sup>1</sup>Formulating population development trends, offering political decisions in social and economic and demographic sphere, we often reduce these problems to quantitative development trends of the population of Russia. - we focus the attention to depopulations on an example of demographic development, birth rate decrease. How many we will be through five, ten, fifty years? This question is often made the corner-stone. A consequence of this relation to a problem are attempts to find methods of increase of birth rate. However, in our opinion, realization of measures of an is social-demographic policy can lead only to calendar shifts in birth rate, increasing birth rate during the favorable periods. The birth rate increase will be followed, most likely, by compensatory decrease in birth rate. We do not urge to refuse from pronatalist policy, we insist on mainly qualitative party of a question, can be to the detriment of to the quantitative purposes. For a question on that, how many the family wishes to have children, it is far not only a question of material possibilities of a family, it first of all a question of valuable orientations of members of the family. During an epoch when economic value of children in country economy has left in the past, and value of time, value of formation, career, leisure for women and men became rather high, the decision on number of children in a family is accepted with allowance for possibilities of satisfaction of variety of requirements. Requirement to promote, have good work to get education, requirement to have spare time for self-development, requirement to be mobile, the psychological requirement for children has not the smaller importance, than. People satisfy the psychological requirement to have children, giving birth to one or two children. The motivation by a birth of children of higher order in modern company is weakened. To change valuable orientations it is rather difficult. If regulation of quantitative parameters of development of the population at least poorly effectively, hence, is much more important to concentrate attention of researchers and state resources to regulation of qualitative aspects of development of the population of Russia. Thus, as the corner-stone the attention to the question «should be brought as we live?» instead of a question «how many us?» . The priority purpose of a family policy should become improvements of the quality of life of members of families. Quality of life of families is measured by comfort of existence in social and a legal sense, a comprehensible standard of living, possibility of a choice of vital strategy, availability of a choice of the social institutes serving families, increase of a material standard of living, and development of a social infrastructure of service of families, along with propagation of family values and demonstration of positive experience of families with children is etc. faster not, presumes to increase to families number of children in a family. Time scarcity factor, first of all, "female" time, is prevailing in hierarchy of values.

Thereupon not only development of a qualitative and multiple social infrastructure of family service, but also an establishment of egalitarian relations in a family, involving of men in sphere of a family life, in household maintenance, in education of children can solve a problem of deficiency of "female" time. Involving of men in family sphere – is enough challenge as we since a birth closed by the stereotypes approving that housekeeping conducting is the woman's role biologically mediated and consequently inexpressible. However, not all "nature" roles to which the public consciousness testifies, are biologically advanced, without delay, they are generated by society. Housekeeping conducting, and largely education of children – roles, with success executed both men, and women. But as initially there is a cast on a floor in public consciousness, it is not enough to create legal conditions of the equal parental rights. Owing to public stereotypes and rupture in the wage of the man will not have the rights, for example, to take vacations on care of the child after a birth of children, to sit with sick children. The rational behavior connected with failure of men from use of parental holiday, can be corrected creation of motivation of sharing in holidays on care of the child. For example, if the man in full or in part uses holiday on care of the child duration of paid parental holiday will increase for one or two months etc.

4. To consider the politician interests of different types of families by attraction to dialogue of representatives of different is social-demographic groups, including through series of interview and focus group discussions. Also in the commission on family businesses, in the committees, making decisions, representatives of different types of families should be included with the right to vote that their interests have been directly presented in the decision-making mechanism. Experience of the European countries proves efficiency of such sharing.

5. To consider the politician interests of different members of families. As, for example, the official statistics practically does not consider intrafamily resource allocation, it is useful to conduct qualitative researches in among representatives of various is social-demographic national groups, revealing types and models of family relations, imperious relations and resource allocation. Focus group or individual profound interviews allow revealing variety of opinions, to hear voices of people, to dispel myths and stereotypes in perception of intrafamily relations<sup>2</sup>.

6. One more prominent aspect of application of qualitative researches – possibility not only to formulate requirements of the population for the relation of a policy of the population, but also to predict reaction of the population to taken measures of a policy.

So, for increase in subjects of decision-making, with the purposes of creation of set of a choice of decisions, for tracing of the "latent" phenomena in society on macro and micro levels it is necessary to use nonconventional while for our country information gathering methods about the population - qualitative researches.

The technique of realization of qualitative inspections allows instead of the answer to questions «how many?» or «as it is frequent?» To receive answers to questions «as?» and «why?» That happens very important for working out of a family policy, a policy of the population. If we have statistical data («how many?» and «as it is frequent?») qualitative researches will help to give interpretation of this data

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<sup>2</sup> One of wide-spread errors of the people attending to a family policy both proclaiming interests and values of a family priority, to perceive a family as a uniform organism in which all questions are amicably decided by members of the family. Real practice is far from these submissions. A family – not closed box. Assertions of neoclassical theories about a family as about a black box, about the base economic entity having the function of utility and the preference pattern on a labor market, on the goods markets, peacefully reaching a consensus («blood – not water» by Samuelson, Becker's "altruism"), are far from a reality. On what the choice of members of the family in this or that situation depends? Where to go to have a rest in the summer? Who will go to work from members of the family? Who will be in charge of housekeeping and sit with children? How many works the husband (or the wife) should have? On what to spend family money first of all: or on a motor vehicle for the husband, or on a washing machine for the wife, or ...? Whose parents and in what volume are necessary for supporting financially? Who will carry out care of the senior generation? Final family decisions can be reached through system of conflicts and to be based on imperious relations in a family. And the power is based in a family either on age, or on unequal love, either on incomes, or on influence on children, or on accessories to a male in patriarchy society. Existing inter-generational and inter-gender streams of intrafamily resource allocation should be considered by working out of measures of a family policy. It is possible to notice that these resources are conditionally divided on material and time. It is important to understand, how (whom?) household incomes (wages, incomes of shares, property, social transfer deeds), how (on what are formed?) they are spent, who carries out those or other works in a household.

(«as?» and «why?»). If we have no statistical data (that often happens in questions of intrafamily inter-generational and inter-gender distributions) qualitative inspections will allow restoring a picture of the intrafamily mechanism of decision-making.

Growth of interest to qualitative researches at the analysis of social dynamics lies in the midway of development of the public thought transformed towards plurality of a choice by consideration of a great number of alternative variants of decisions, search of the non-standard decisions inherent in a concrete situation, a concrete problem, a concrete stage of development of society, social group, firm, a family. The technique of realization of qualitative researches (as, for example, and the technique so-called "case study" in economic and social researches) allows to consider, on the one hand, plurality of a choice of decisions, on the other hand, to search for decisions (including non-standard) concrete problems of development.

#### Qualitative data in population researches in Russia

The opened possibilities of dialogue with the western sociology in 1990-th years have given soil and to acquaintance and distribution of qualitative methods at the Russian sociological school. Most actively the first introduced these methods the Russian researchers of gender problems (Possibilities ..., 1997).

In the last years interest of researchers-sociologists in Russia to qualitative researches of a family and the spoilage, based on the phenomenological approach is swept up. Choosing as objects of researches female novels, teleserials, jokes, family portraits and so forth, authors reveal cardinal change of all symbolics of a family image, an image of the childhood (Galkina, 2000; Kiselyova, 2003; Lebed', 1994, 2002, 2003; Medkov, 2003; Medkova, 2000, 2001; Novoselova, 2003). Among original qualitative researches it is possible to note the researches conducted in arrivals of orthodox churches of Moscow and Moscow suburbs by a method any graphic representations of leading values of respondents. Separate aspects of problems of depopulation and family crisis were discussed in focus groups (Frolov, 2005). The traditional (familiar) method for the Russian researchers - the content-analysis of texts - became more active and began to include elements of qualitative approaches in the analysis of texts (Pronevskaja, 2005; Kolobova, 2005).

However in Russia qualitative techniques in the framework of socio-demographic researches spread difficultly enough. In our opinion, here is present the institutional factor. The demographic Russian school traditionally bases on economic faculty of the Moscow State University by M.V.Lomonosov. Therefore distribution of sociological methods of the data collection and the information analysis to population research occurs slowly, it is necessary to prove each time to possibility of these methods, to combine them with quantitative methods of research.

Studying of reproductive attitudes and vital behavior is conducted by methods of interview and focus groups. There are studies of ethno cultural and confession features of reproductive behavior of women (Zinurova, 2006), reproductive motivations and models of the relation to pregnancy (Bezrukova, 2000), the relation to the reproductive rights and their observance (Ballaeva, 1998), reproductive attitudes and contraceptive behavior (Kalabikhina, 2004), communication of off-schedule reproductive actions and

prevalence of violence (Kalabikhina, 2005), the relation to health (Nazarova, 2007), risk vital behavior (Kalabikhina, 2008) and so forth.

Qualitative sociological methods also are actively introduced into research of quality of social system and social services (Questions ..., 2003: ch.2; Dyomin, Ivanova, 2005; Kalabikhina, 2008a).

It is necessary to express hope that introduction of qualitative methods in the socio-demographic researches has taken place the first difficult stage of a recognition and in the future of possibility of these methods (especially in a combination with quantitative methods) can stand in good stead to a science and people.

### Conclusion

Qualitative research in demography works, as a rule, to analyze demographic behavior, and to estimate beneficiaries' perspectives and attitudes to demographic policy. To answer questions "how?" and "why?" instead of "how many?" and "how often?" The question of choice between quantitative (positive) and qualitative (phenomenological) research is not only the question of technique but also one of epistemology. "Abilities" of qualitative methods: 1) Social reality construction in process; 2) Unstructured, flexible guide and research program; 3) Possibilities to re-examination of hypothesis; 4) Close links between researcher and interviewers, researcher could be inside investigated reality; 5) "Fan of opinions" (rich data); 6) "Feed-back" effects in process; 7) Possibilities to get immediately preliminary results; 8) Redistribution of time during research process.

Nevertheless, there are some "disabilities" of qualitative research: "representation", data reliability, subjectivity, comparativeness, difficulties to collect data archiving etc.

Quality of qualitative data does not link with so cold "representation" because of aims of research to get data, for example, on marginal, hidden, or untypical behavior, and we do not have a priori the problem of representation. Validity of this type of data could be much more (receiving of new knowledge) but problem of data reliability is exists.

Some ways to increase the quality of qualitative data: permanent progress in education and experience of researches; attraction of specialist from initial and related discipline to expertise methodology; exchange of data and methodology: data archiving, methodological workshops and seminars; open methodology in details; collecting of various materials in process of collecting data (audio, video materials, expert interview and comments, diary, etc.) and open access to them for all colleagues; permanent rethinking of hypothesis, re-examination of process of research; combination of quantitative and qualitative researches.

Quantitative facilities to quality research in demography: 1) Hypothesis; 2) "Sampling" (for example, socio-demographic groups choice, modeling, etc.); 3) Region choice; 4) Themes for discussion in groups. Qualitative facilities to quantitative research in demography: 1) Hypothesis; 2) Questionnaire; 3) Interpretation of demographic trend and data in a) Deviation analysis; b) Stereotype and Myth reconstruction; c) Intimate behavior analysis; d) Formation and estimation of demographic policy.

In Russia qualitative techniques in the framework of socio-demographic researches spread difficultly enough. In our opinion, here is present the institutional factor - the demographic Russian school traditionally bases on economic faculty of the University. Therefore distribution of sociological methods of the data collection and the information analysis to population research occurs slowly, it is necessary to prove each time to possibility of these methods, to combine them with quantitative methods of research. However there are some researches of vital behavior, reproductive attitudes and influence of socio-demographic policies on population produced by qualitative methods that is create hope to spread these methods in population researches in Russia.

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