

PECULIARITIES OF THE CONTEMPORARY FAMILY: RELATIONSHIPS MODEL IN RUSSIA AND IN THE WORLD

Особенности современной семьи: модель взаимоотношений
в России и мире

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ABSTRACT

Modern society is currently undergoing the stage of transition. Such a change has an impact on all social institutions, including the family and family-marital relations. People are becoming increasingly liberated and independent. This affects marital relations, which are currently being built according to new paradigms associated with greater responsibility for oneself and less for the partner. All these are new phenomena of our social reality, requiring a new understanding and development of new social practice. To validly disclose the features of the modern model of family relations, we will build our considerations in line with evolutionary, functional, empirical and interactionist approaches, based on the assertion that the family is, first of all, a small social group, where each partner has their own, often opposing, interests, and which at the same time acts as an integral social system.

Keywords: family, marriage, relations, social group, personality, society.

РЕЗЮМЕ

Современное общество в настоящее время переживает переходный этап. Такое изменение оказывает влияние на все социальные институты, включая семью и семейно-брачные отношения. Люди становятся все более раскрепощенными и независимыми. Это сказывается на супружеских отношениях, которые в настоящее время строятся в соответствии с новыми парадигмами, связанными с большей ответственностью за себя и меньшей степени за партнера. Все это - новые явления нашей социальной реальности, требующие нового понимания и развития новой социальной практики. Чтобы достоверно раскрыть особенности современной модели семейных отношений, мы строим наши рассуждения в

русле эволюционного, функционального, эмпирического и интеракционистского подходов, основанных на утверждении, что семья — это прежде всего небольшая социальная группа, где каждый партнер имеет свои, часто противоположные, интересы и которая в то же время выступает как целостная социальная система.

Ключевые слова: семья, брак, отношения, социальная группа, личность, общество.

INTRODUCTION

A society passes through different stages in the process of historical formation: as it develops, it undergoes diverse changes in the forms and types of social links, value and life orientations, socio-cultural norms and traditions in key areas of life, etc. One of these critical periods is being experienced by contemporary society. Changing social connections transform both the individual's consciousness and relationships in social groups, both large (society as a whole) and small (family), making significant adjustments to them.

The transition to a new paradigm of social relations, that is characterized by the principle of tolerance as the dominant position, has led to the formation of a new different morality, largely rejecting the outdated values of the previous era and, as a result, the model of traditional family and marriage ties.

Alternative forms of cohabitation are becoming increasingly common. In particular, more and more often couples deliberately refuse to register marriage in order to maintain a free relationship in the form of a so-called “civil marriage” (non-marriage cohabitation). For example, there are currently about 4 million couples in Russia who are joined in legally un-formed unions. There is a growing number of couples who do not want to have children (childfree) and burden themselves with raising and caring for them.

Most experts agree that the fragility of today's marriages is mostly determined by the fact that young people have less and less genuine respect for the institution of the family. In addition, the general problem of the younger generation is a low level of awareness and sometimes just ignorance in matters of marriage, as a consequence; and the general reason for the destruction of families is the misconception in creating a family which is based only on the strength and passion of their own feelings and emotions with an unwillingness to take responsibility for their partner.

All these new phenomena of our social reality require their theoretical understanding and development of new social practices.

LITERATURE REVIEW

The “family” as a social institution is a socio-historical phenomenon. This means that over the millennial history of its existence, humanity has changed many forms of family structures and marriage relations. The key role here was played, first of all, by the existing social and industrial relations, as well as the level of development of the spiritual and material culture of the society.

The scientific study of the historical forms of family life began in the XIX century and is associated with the works of Bachofen (2018) and Morgan (1964). Their ideas

were further developed in the works of Brian (2010), Зидер (1997), Роуз (1989), Энгельс (2009), and others on this topic.

Apparently, the reason lies in the fact that the in-depth study of family relations was based, on the one hand, on the basis of data from the Ethnography of the tribes at the primitive stage of development, (however, this state cannot be called “purely primitive”, since in one way or another they were influenced by the civilizations that had discovered them), and on the other — on the basis of hermeneutical analysis of ancient written sources — from the Bible norms to the old Slavic homestead guides.

At the same time, modern scientific literature provides a large number of works on the psychology of family relations. Among the main areas of research, one can highlight such aspects as orientation to joint family leisure as a means of strengthening relationships in the family (Pomfret, Varley 2019; Бабаев et al. 2019); health care as one of the priority values of the modern family (Маркова, Флорес 2019); as a consequence, the review of requirements for the place of residence as a spatial education and household management in the direction of increasing comfort (Halatcheva-Trapp et al. 2019) and quality of life in general (Alyahya 2019).

An important place in the research of experts is given to global transformations. In particular, global trends in changing demography (Leeson 2018;) and “family instability” (Hadfield et al. 2018; Avdic, Arizo 2018), social forms and conditions of functioning of the modern family (Frolova et al. 2019; Malimonov et al. 2018; Luchinskaya et al. 2018) and others.

However, insufficient attention is paid to patterns of family and partnership relations and prospects for their further evolution. This issue is of substantial importance, because humanity undergoes a process of transition, which in turn determines the transitional state of all social institutions, including the family as a fundamental element for the modern society. Consequently, F. Engels wrote a work under the title “The Origin of the family, private property and the state”. According to the researcher, it is from the family and marriage relations of primitive society that both private property and the state were originated in the course of their development (Энгельс 2009).

METHODS

Psychology of family relations has recently emerged as an independent science discipline that studies objective patterns, mechanisms, and manifestations of family relationships. There are several fundamental approaches to the study of family relations:

- the evolutionary approach considers the family as a dynamic structure that changes in the course of the historical process;
- the empirical approach treats the family as a small social group, in which family relations are built on the establishment of emotionally close relations between its members, mutually taking into account the needs and desires of each other;
- the functional approach considers family relations as derivatives of its socio-cultural functions, due to the adoption of a system of roles related to marriage, the establishment of family ties, social reproduction (birth and upbringing of children);

- the so-called “scientism” approach considers the family as a kind of integral unity of interacting individuals within the framework of socially significant relations of “self” and “other”;
- the structural approach that emerged in the study of language is aimed at elucidating the features of the structures of social systems within which partners construct their relationships;
- the interactionist approach is aimed at studying the process of social interaction in order to understand the social behavior of an individual, as well as to identify means of implementing and regulating the process of social interaction;
- social constructivism studies social reality as a constantly changing dynamic process that is constructed by society and constructs it in its turn.

We build our arguments mainly on the basis of evolutionary, functional, empirical and interactionist approaches, based on the fact that the family is, first of all, a small social group, where each member has its own interests, often opposite to their partner, and which, at the same time, acts as an integral social system.

RESULTS

Before considering the issue, it is necessary to define the concept of “family”, which is rather complicated as the family plays a special role in everyone’s life and is comprehended individually. Therefore, it is quite difficult to fit the entire complex of emotional experiences and social relations into a terminologically unambiguous definition. Each of us describes this concept personally, deeply and intimately, as an individual experience.

Let us consider some of these definitions contained in various academic sources. For example, N. Smelser bases his definition on two approaches – functional (the study of socially significant functions of the family) and conflict resolution (features of the distribution of power within the family) – and calls the family “an association of people based on consanguinity, marriage or adoption, connected by common life and mutual responsibility for raising children” (Smelser 1994: 424). Гидденс (2005: 156) considers family and marriage as complementary concepts. “A family is a group of people connected by direct kinship, whose adult members assume responsibilities for child care”. He defines marriage as “the sexual union of two adult persons having received recognition and approval of the society” (Ibid.). Thompson and Priestley (1996) interpret the family as “a group consisting of people who are related to each other either by blood, or by basic, intimate, sexual relations. The family is often based on marriage and tends to be more permanent than other types of attitudes and social relationships”. A similar definition is given in Dictionary of English Language and Culture (1992) which defines a family as “a group of one, usually two adults and their children living in the same house”.

In this sense, the approach to the family from the point of view of social relations within the framework of the reproductive concept, the founders of which are K. Marx and F. Engels has not lost its relevance. For them matrimony was a form of relations

between the sexes sanctioned by society, and “the family itself gives us a miniature picture of the same opposites and contradictions in which society moves” (Энгельс, 2009).

A well-known Russian family expert Antonov (2018: 44–45) suggests that “the family is a community of people based on a single family-wide activity, connected by the ties of matrimony, parenthood and kinship, and thereby carrying out the reproduction of the population and the succession of family generations, as well as the socialization of children and the maintenance of the existence of family members” He also states: “Only the presence of the triune relationship of matrimony-parenthood-kinship allows us to speak about the construction of the family as such in its strict form” (Ibid.). The dominance of the institutional characteristics of the family in this definition is obvious. That is, the main purpose of the family is procreation that is the birth of children and their socialization.

In addition, the family is an important social formation that helps the individual adapt to life in a changing society (Comte 2012, Goode 1987). Figuratively, it can be compared with a “spring” or “shock absorber” that softens social pressure on a particular person. It is the intermediary role that helps us consider the family both as a social institution and as a small group. Distinguishing the characteristics of the family as an institution and as a group allows us to consider the implementation of this intermediary role at both the macro and micro levels of analysis, reflecting this in special terms. At the same time, it is understandable that this approach does not fully settle the dispute – these are different aspects of this field of activity.

However, despite the importance of the socio-economic function of the family, it should be differentiated from the household, which can be led by both an individual and a group of people who are not related. In the same way, living on the same premises cannot be a determining factor in the understanding of the family. At all times, it is still based on the concept of a married couple living with their descendants and representatives of the older generation.

Family life is characterized by various material (physiological, economic, etc.) and spiritual (moral, legal, psychological, aesthetic, etc.) processes. The family also affects the life of society through childbearing, socialization (mastering the skills of life in society) and acculturation (familiarization with the achievements of modern culture) of children and adolescents, instilling skills of work, influencing the physical, spiritual, moral and aesthetic development of its members.

At the same time, as a specific small socio-psychological group, the family is characterized by a special system of interpersonal relations. There is a natural difficulty in typologizing family and matrimonial relations through the prism of interpersonal or social aspects. If we consider matrimonial relations as interpersonal ones, we can say that they are subjectively experienced relations between people, objectively manifested in the nature and ways of mutual influences in the course of joint activities and communication.

Speaking about relations in social communities, we can note that family and family relations are considered as the organism that is able to exist and function even if its components (members) are at a great distance from each other, they are able to follow the principle of development, i. e. the image of the family is undergoing a time of change: family can adjust, split, give rise to another, etc. Thus, matrimonial

relationships can be in a separate subgroup that can be characterized by different types of relations (Мясищев 2011: 24).

The well-known Russian sociologist and philosopher Голд (2009), who has been studying the marital behavior of individuals for a long time, comes to the conclusion that in a modern monogamous family there is a process “the essence of which is the autonomization of matrimonial, sexual and procreative behavior”. The principle of autonomy determines “ambiguity, unobtrusiveness, flexibility of the regulatory system”. The researcher explains: “It is indeed preferable, but not necessary, to marry, it is desirable to have children, but childlessness does not seem to be an abnormal condition. Children born outside the institution of marriage are not perceived as marginalized. In short, modern normativity, being a social regulator, takes into account the individual identity of a person to a greater extent than traditional (rigid) normativity” (Ibid.). This “sexual revolution” (Reich 1945) led to the rejection of the principles of forced moral regulation of gender relations, based on the suppression of natural biological needs of people in favor of economic considerations and which led to the inefficient use of energy resources of humanity within a patriarchal society.

There is a relevant need to distinguish a number of key organizational and constructive features of a modern family:

- marital union is based on affection and emotional intimacy;
- the prevalence of the so-called “nuclear type” family;
- as before, parenthood is an institution of primary socialization and acculturation;
- possibility of divorce.

A number of social and psychological characteristics prevailing in the majority of Russian families can be added:

- a high degree of reciprocal material and emotional dependence of family members;
- the democratization of family relations, the transition from a rigid fixation of roles to the interchangeability of spouses, help and mutual support;
- low emotional inclusion (and even detachment) of the spouse (husband) in family relationships;
- high conflict potential due to the cohabitation of several generations in one household (Эйдемиллер, Юстицкис, 2015).

As for global trends in the development of family models, we can identify a number of characteristics that have clearly emerged in the past few decades:

- birth rate decline; (personal well-being is the top priority);
- reproductive attitude to childlessness as a conscious choice of spouses (childfree);
- appearance of the families, where both spouses are engaged in their professional careers.

This family model is referred to as double income without children. Usually these are couples with higher education, prestigious jobs and a “well-off” lifestyle.

As for the Russian specifics in the development of family relations, it is overlapped by a general social disadvantage, which logically leads to:

- rise in the divorce rate;
- early teenage parenthood;
- increase in the number of social orphans.

A prominent sociologist M. S. Matskovsky proposed a classification of modern families (Мацковский, 1995). His typology shows the following types of families by income (income dynamics for 1995 – 2019):– crisis families below the poverty line that experience serious difficulties (“vicious cycle of poverty”) and can be found at the level of physiological survival (1995 – approx. 14%; 2019 – approx. 2%);

- marginal families that suffer from extreme poverty, accompanied by alcoholism, diseases; they are not able to fulfill the basic functions of socializing children (1995 – approx. 25%; 2019 – approx. 24%);
- middle-class families that solve financial and economic problems without external assistance; unable to purchase expensive goods and services (1995 – approx. 51%; 2019 – approx. 65%);
- prosperous families that have high incomes, allowing them to use all types of services, regardless of their cost (1995 – approx. 10%; 2019 – approx. 10%)¹.

Recently, we witness the increase in the number of people seeking alternative forms of partnerships. Notwithstanding the diversity of relationships between people, marriage unions can be classified into the following categories:

- church marriage – consecrated by the church; in many countries it has legal force; it is the only legal form of marriage in some countries;
- morganatic (unequal) marriage – a concept currently obsolete, preserved in dynastic regulations and laws of some countries;
- civil marriage – relations between partners-“spouses”, not registered in accordance with the procedure established by law;
- trial (unregistered) marriage – differs from the traditional one in the absence of registration, common residence and a joint household;
- temporary marriage – its duration is determined by agreement of partners and is prescribed in the marriage contract (the legislation of separate countries recognizes its legal force);
- the so-called “Swedish family” or communal (group) marriage – a family in which several men and several women live;
- fictitious marriage – registration of marriage without the intention to create a real family in order to acquire any preferences;

1. Data on the distribution of income are given according to the data of Federal State Statistics Service (Rosstat) and *Dynamics of population income. Bulletin of current trends in the Russian economy. February, 2020. Issue. 58. P. 12-13.*

- same-sex marriage – cohabitation of a homosexual couple;
- guest marriage (extraterritorial) – a registered marriage in which spouses live each at one's own home, meeting only from time to time, and without leading a common household (Brian 2010: 257).

DISCUSSION

Modern family history offers a number of conceptual schemes for analyzing trends and prospects for the development of models of family relations. With all the variety of points of view, they can be reduced to three main positions:

- the traditional matrimony naturally turns into a modern family under the influence of socio-economic and spiritual-cultural modernization (the so-called progressive evolution);
- the society is experiencing a crisis of the family institution (as a consequence of the general crisis situation) and its deep degradation;
- family transformation is a global trend that inevitably affects the development of the family institution in our country.

We adhere to the first thesis which is considered to be the most constructive and relevant point of view that actually takes place in our society. Objectively, the family lifestyle is influenced by such factors as transformation of the system of modern values in the direction of greater tolerance to a variety of forms of marriage partnership, including those previously condemned. In addition, the decomposition of the former (Soviet) social infrastructure, the destruction of public consumption funds accompanied by the reduction of income level for most of the population, the commercialization of healthcare and education, inflation, the growth of unemployment, etc. is superimposed on the domestic specifics of family and marriage relations. According to V. N. Druzhinin, the most striking manifestation of the collapse of the traditional family is the men's loss of socio-economic opportunities to provide for their families, realizing the full responsibility (Дружинин, 2012). A study of families of various socio-demographic types made it possible to establish that in modern conditions, socially vulnerable, single-parent, special need people, previously prosperous and even employable types of families are affected by poverty and deprivation.

Such critical moments on a global scale affect, first of all, the emotional state of people. As an adaptation mechanism to the current difficult situation, new life models began to emerge, focused on the adjustment to and overcoming of negative phenomena both of an external and internal character in relation to the family caused by problems in interpersonal relationships. Due to material instability and psychological oppression, the survival line has now become the main family strategy. Experts note a significant increase in individualism and the privatization of lifestyle as a new social phenomenon. Primarily, there is a greater orientation towards family and family leisure, domesticating the way of life. (Pomfret, Varley 2019; Бабаев et al. 2019; Маркова, Флорес 2019; Halatcheva-Trapp et al. 2019).

This method of passive adaptation to difficulties is common to most families in Russia. They continue to focus mainly on extra earnings for the main salary. The incomes of most Russian families provide only a minimal level of physical existence. Sociological studies show that in the current social situation, most families rely on their internal resources (Мацковский 1995: 32-34). The authority of the state and society as a guarantee of social protection declined considerably.

In addition, such a social phenomenon of modernity as the mythologizing of family and the processes of its development also plays a negative role in this process. Myths, persistent social stereotypes distort the ongoing changes in family as a sociocultural institution, lead to its devaluation, and therefore act as a tangible obstacle to the creation and functioning of a harmonious family. These include the myths that became most widespread at the end of the last century about the “collapse of the family as a social institution” and the “degeneration of real men” and “masculinization of women”.

The first myth of the insolvency of family relations is based on the facts of the families are gradually transferring their functions to other social institutions and the increasing effectiveness of the implementation of family functions by each spouse separately, independently of each other. Indeed, in today's conditions, each spouse can successfully independently carry out their household functions. The implementation of the educational function by parents is facilitated by the system of public education or nannies (in the Russian reality, often with the participation of grandparents). Communication can be gradually reduced to a circle of work colleagues. And even the reproductive function can be successfully realized without the participation of the spouse through artificial insemination or the involvement of a “donor mother”.

Growing divorce statistics, an increase in the number of unmarried people provide reasons to make negative forecasts about the obsolescence of family as a social institution. An additional destructive factor lies in the new forms of organization of relations between partners: cohabitation or “Sunday (coming) father” option.

Two other myths about the general feminization of men and the masculinization of women are closely related and mutually reinforce each other's negative effects. This popular opinion is supported by the orientation towards a new trend in unisex fashion – clothes, behavior, lifestyle, habits, leveling the fundamental differences between men and women. The reason for this is the hypertrophied opposition of masculinity and femininity, up to their absolute opposite. It is claimed that in reality, there are no “purely masculine” or “purely feminine” types of personality. In essence, a human person is androgynous, i.e. it combines feminine and masculine qualities, only in a different ratio for men and women. This expands the boundaries of the social space traditionally reserved for men and women and asserts them new social statuses, which forces popular opinion to gradually change their social role and mission.

At the same time, we believe that it would be erroneous to associate the listed alarming tendencies with the collapse of family as a social institution. Myths about the decline of family reflect the inability to see real changes taking place behind negative external symptoms – namely, the formation of qualitatively new relationships within the framework of the institution of the family, due to changes in the place and role of women in reproduction and society, relationships based on mutual respect for the rights of every spouses to individualization and full personal self-realization in the professional

and social spheres. Family development is undergoing a crisis at this historical stage, the resolution of which will lead to the emergence of a new type of family — with a new functional hierarchical structure and qualitatively different (equal and partner) relationships between spouses.

Despite the difficulties that the modern family is experiencing, the institution of marriage and the importance of family values have retained their unconditional value for most Russians². In recent years, there has been a clear, undoubtedly positive shift in favor of choosing family as a form of partnership, optimal for providing the necessary conditions for personal growth and self-development. The value of family and its rating is definitely growing³. Family, like society as a whole, is undergoing an adaptation period, moving into a new quality and developing new ways of interaction.

CONCLUSION

Thus, we can conclude that the family is a social institution that best meets the individual needs of family members, performs their primary socialization and acculturation, acts as a mediator in the relationship between a particular person and society as a whole. The family, as a small social group, has its own unique individual culture, personal contact between members of the group, cohesion, a certain emotional and psychological climate, intimacy of relations, the degree of homogeneity, etc.

There is an inextricable interconnection between the notions of “marriage”, “matrimony” and “family”. Their social nature is ultimately determined by the prevailing social relations. In addition, they also experience the serious influence of politics, law, morality, religion, etc. By sanctioning marriage, society takes on certain obligations to protect it and imposes responsibility on people who have got married for the provision and upbringing of children, and, consequently, for the future of family.

At present family, like society as a whole, is undergoing a transition period, accompanied by negative phenomena: instability of marriage, a decrease in the social responsibility of spouses, a high level of their individuation, etc. At the same time, there is every reason to consider this transformation as a natural evolution of a traditional family into a new, modern one, with new connections and relationships.

2. According to American psychologists, “before, during, and after the peak of the sexual revolution, marriage remained the primary interpersonal goal of most young people”. According to their data, more than 90% of 80-year-olds claim that they want to get married, and more than 90% of 50-year-olds are (or used to be) married (Бэрон et al., 2003). That is, even after experiencing a radical re-evaluation in the sphere of family and marriage relations, marriage still remains the most attractive form of joint life.

3. See, for example, the research on “Healthy lifestyle as a social value and real practice” and “the influence of behavioral factors on the health of the population”, carried out by the Sociological center RAGS. Retrieved from: http://parentalnotes.com/?page_id=3441. (access date 05.03.2018).

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