

## Global changes of family unit in modern Russia

Igor Vasilevich Malimonov  
Siberian federal university  
[igonet70@mail.ru](mailto:igonet70@mail.ru)

Dmitriy Vladimirovich Rakhinskiy (Candidate of philosophy)  
Siberian federal university  
[siridar@mail.ru](mailto:siridar@mail.ru)

Irina Georgievna Sinkovskaya (Candidate of sociology)  
Siberian federal university  
[iranet.75@mail.ru](mailto:iranet.75@mail.ru)

Lyudmila Gennadevna Korol (Candidate of biology)  
Reshetnev Siberian state university of science and technology  
[kinghouse@yandex.ru](mailto:kinghouse@yandex.ru)

Larissa Yurievna Aisner (Candidate of culturology)  
Krasnoyarsk state agrarian university  
[larisa-ajsner@yandex.ru](mailto:larisa-ajsner@yandex.ru)

Svetlana Vaycheslavovna Bershadskaya  
Krasnoyarsk state agrarian university  
[bsv97@yandex.ru](mailto:bsv97@yandex.ru)

Svetlana Mikhailovna Trashkova (Candidate of legal)  
Krasnoyarsk state agrarian university  
[sveta\\_kurbatova@mail.ru](mailto:sveta_kurbatova@mail.ru)

### **Abstract**

*The current study is relevant due to the necessity to analyse transformations in modern family-marriage relations. The objective of the study is to consider inevitability of the given transformations as an integral part of natural changes in modern Russian society. The leading approach to research of the given problem is the opinion that in new conditions of existence and society development an active process of change of former, traditional, patriarchal male dominated families with clear split of roles into new forms of family-marriage relations is taking place. The paper demonstrates a family-unit as a part of global social and economic system in which structural changes of the whole system naturally involve changes of its elements; changes typical for a modern family-unit in marriage behaviour, family functions and value orientations are described. Research findings represent practical scientific importance for those working in the field of social research in sociology, psychology, population science.*

**Key words:** *globalization, family unit, family transformation, family values, family functions, Russian Federation.*

### **Introduction**

Nowadays, the problem of globalisation is one of the most discussed topics both by scientists and ordinary people as it affects various aspects of societal activity. But the emphasis is primarily made on two aspects of globalization – economic aspect and political one. However, consequences of globalisation become apparent in other spheres of societal activity, the system of family relations including. At this point it is quite possible to agree with opinion that the family unit is some kind of social microcosm, its structure represents

micro model of the larger society. That kind of social microcosm reflects the whole range of social relations (Goncharov, 2002, 4). Such assessment is far not new. "The separate family unit gives us an insight into the same contrasts and contradictions in which the society divided into classes has been developing since time when an epoch of civilisation approached and which is incapable neither to resolve, nor to overcome them" (Engels, 1961,70). Each socio-economic formation is characterised by the revision of norms of family relations which to some extent reflect its specific traits. Thus, emergence of the traditional monogamous, patriarchal family is caused by accumulation of private property on means of production in hands of the man (husband, father, son, grandfather, etc.).

Throughout societal development the role of the family unit as a social institution has been undergoing considerable changes. Transformations were caused by various factors, first of all, transformations of social and economic relations and changes in mental and ethical standards and rules. Thanks to its flexibility and universal ability to adapt to peculiarities of social structures, the family unit has created a huge variety of family types, beginning with traditional multiple family structure with many children up to nuclear one with few children. And at present both in Europe, and in Russia the classical patriarchal family has gradually being replaced by modern informal and alternative family types (co-habitation, guest marriages, group marriages, same-sex marriages, communes, etc.). Changes involved affect family relations both as social institution in the whole and individual family in particularly. Changes affect absolutely every sphere of family life: the structure and the number of family members, material security, mutual relations between family members, etc.

Major transformations of family relations can be traced to forming of new value orientations which are based on aspiration to personal freedom and priority of material consumption. Under this influence the family unit has been changing its forms and has been acquiring new characteristics and qualities, some of which challenge safe existence of modern society.

These changes in one form or another are broadcast vertically (next generation) or horizontally (representatives of one generation). And here we can agree with the following opinion that ordinary historical reflection, the form of which is the construction of a past reality (in the form of a school, university course of history or textbook, for example) is designed to teach how the transfer of historical knowledge to "all" or "many." And these "all" or "many" will use and even transmit this knowledge in practically unchanged (in relation to the previously received) form "other" (for example, children in the family) (Kudashov, Chernykh, Yatsenko, Grigorieva, Pfanenshtil, Rakhinsky, 2017, 142).

### **Methodology and methods**

The methodological basis of this work is the evolutionary approach, formed due to the works of G. Spencer, L.G. Morgan, F. Engels, M.M. Kovalevsky, S.P. Tolstova, S.I. Famine, etc. In the context of this approach, the replacement of historical forms of family and marriage institutions, the transformation of family functional-value bases is viewed as a natural development process reflecting changes in socio-economic social relations. As the basic research methods, the authors of the work used methods of theoretical analysis and synthesis, comparative-historical analysis, generalization and interpretation.

### **Findings and Discussion**

Thus, what is happening today in the life of a modern Russian family? Findings of Russian philosophers, sociologists, demographers, psychologists demonstrate the numerous changes in family relations. Analyzing various opinions about transition from the traditional family type to the modern one, it is necessary to underlying like-minded positions of various authors which send us to the evidence of these changes.

Russian researchers mark out the following negative changes in characteristics of the modern Russian family unit: 1) Few children, 2) Nuclearisation with typical conjugality; 3) Late marriage; 4) Easy divorce (Kovaleva, 2015, 270). In addition there exist numerous descriptions of similar tendencies, namely, mass nuclearisation of the family units, ...increased number of aged single persons, ...a considerable drop in marriages, ... dramatic increase in number of single mothers (unwed motherhood), in number of lone-parent families with children, male deuterogamy, ... a great number of families with few children (Antonov, 2007, 182). Table 1 shows similar differences between traditional and modern family types (Vishnevskiy, Shapko 1997, 175).

**Table 1** – Differences in family types

<b>Traditional Family Type</b>	<b>Modern Family Type</b>
patriarchal (with senior\male dominance)	Biarchal (“bi”-two), based on spouses equality
precise task sharing between spouses	Functions of spouses are blurred
compound, enlarged multigenerational family with numerous relatives	Nuclear family which consists of parents and their children
With many children	With few children
Family unit as an agent of production	Family unit as a social community which is predominately materialistic, domestic and leisure-time
Parenthood and kinship play the leading role in the family unit	Conjugality – the leading relation in a family unit
Family unit – social unit, family for society	Self-value of a family unit, the importance of interpersonal relations in the family unit
Major functions – economic, domestic, leisure-time, reproductive, educative	Basic functions – sexual, socio-psychological, cultural

Likewise we cannot but agree with the opinion that a number of the major trends such as urbanization, industrialisation, demographic revolution and transition to industrial type of social organisation of modern society in many respects have already taken place. Besides definite quantitative indicators of a new society were achieved; but their qualitative readings differ from those prevailing in modern society. Russian society still represents rather complicated correlation of elements of backwardness and development, traditionalism and modernisation, dynamics and stagnation. The coexistence of the above mentioned inconsistent elements creates ambivalent socio-cultural environment in which social and political processes of the newest Russian history are in the constant flux (Bim-Bad, Gavrov, 2010, 121).

Changes in system of family relations have substantially influenced marriage behaviour as well. Changes in the character of the interfamily relations, characterised by transition from authoritative-patriarchal relations to more democratic and equal in rights, have affected the process of choosing a future spouse, marriage, and the role of intermediaries (Chistayakova, 2007, 137). Those changes become apparent in the phases of courting, marriage, the beginning of family life and the birth of the first child. In this way when modern marriage behaviour is described the following characteristics are marked out: inadequate motivation of the marriage (for example, the partners get married because one of them wants to separate from his or her parental family), the considerable divergence in family traditions and background of the spouses, structural differences of parental families (one of spouses is the only child, another one is from a larger family), wedding when family members or friends are not present, pregnancy of the wife before marriage (Belogay, 2010, 21)

With reference to stability, sustainability, duration of the modern family unit here we again face considerable changes. The modern family unit is extremely unstable; from the very beginning it encounters a great deal of difficulties. Here it is necessary to pay attention to

antenuptial pregnancy as one of the motives of marriage. In case people are connected by the deep and long feelings pregnancy serves as the purpose of entering into a marriage, as a measure of responsibility voluntarily taken up. But it is quite frequent when pregnancy is the result of such negative tendency as early beginning of sexual life which is characteristic both for young males and females. In this case, forcible marriages become from the very beginning the reason of divorce.

After marriage the spouses face new difficulties – adultery, selfish behaviour of one of the spouse or economic problems – which lead to family breakup and divorce becomes the habitual practice, easy and even desirable alternative to family life. To estimate the divorce rate in modern Russia it is enough to look at the number of divorces in 2014 when 1000 marriages ended in 566 divorces ([http://www.gks.ru/bgd/regl/b14\\_106/Main.htm](http://www.gks.ru/bgd/regl/b14_106/Main.htm), Table 2). Negative influence of divorce is formed at all stages, beginning with primary incident and ending in family breakup.

**Table 2** – Number of marriages and divorces in Russia

Marriages			Divorces		
Years	Units	Per 1000 of population	Years	Units	Per 1000 of population
2009	1199446	8,4	2009	699430	4,9
2010	1215066	8,5	2010	639321	4,5
2011	1316011	9,2	2011	669376	4,7
2012	1213598	8,5	2012	644101	4,5
2013	1225501	8,5	2013	667971	4,7
2014	1225985	8,4	2014	693730	4,7

The reasons of stains are different, among the main (according to researches WCIOM) there were a treason (24 %) and poverty (21 %) (WCIOM, 2015, Table 3)

**Table 3** – The main reasons for stains in Russia

Payment order №	Possible answers	Number of %
1	Treason	24
2	Poverty	21
3	Misundersstanding	19
4	Alcoholism	16
5	Different views	8
6	Lack of the housing	6
7	Another	6

Divorce consequences negatively affect all family members, children being in the first place. Another socially significant harmful consequence of divorce is emergence of one-parent family. The negative impact of lone-parent family is so great that the term “socio-psychological ugliness” was introduced (Druzhinin, 2007, 138). Decisive importance of the family unit manifests itself in a mother who satisfies primary needs of a baby, caresses, stimulates, communicates, gives the feeling of security, sincere affection and coziness. The father represents himself as the authoritative social sample, the pattern of behaviour, his presence in the family unit gives the child the feeling of self-reliance and independence in decision-making (Druzhinin, 2007, 138). Leaving the family by one of the parents

psychologically traumatizes a child, leads to heavy and in many cases negative consequences which fail to be compensated. If a mother leaves the family a child is likely to lose self-esteem and to feel abandoned and useless. If a father leaves the family a male child loses the model of male pattern of behaviour and a female-child – the pattern of behaviour of the opposite sex. Besides, negative child experience of the family breakup is accompanied by the guilt complex formed because of inability of a child to objectively estimate the reason of parental breakup and leaves a child with the feeling that he or she is the main reason of divorce. The restriction on meeting with one of the parents (the father in the majority of cases) is sometimes applied as a certain strategy of punishment of a former spouse. The restriction aggravates psychological trauma of the child and subsequently can generate patterns of behaviour of a future husband or wife which would create maximum protection against any form of psychological dependence, that primordially lead to certain distance and closeness in mutual relations.

Thus, among the main reasons of the increased divorce rate are the following: possibility of modern women to most advantageously go in for professional career and to maintain not only themselves but their children as well (besides, state protection of property rights of the mother and children after divorce promotes such situation); hasty (thoughtless) marriages; the clash of interests which are the result of the absence of practical skills of mutual concessions and agreements. Besides, the divorce rates are influenced by such factors as increased social tolerance to divorces and weakening of social control over marriage relations.

Speaking about the traditional family unit we notice that the major changes have occurred not only in structure but in family value orientations as well. And among the most important transformations of family relations are appearance of new value orientations based on aspiration to maximum personal freedom and priority of material consumption (Malimonov, Sinkovskaya, Korol, Rakhinskiy, 2016, 25).

Describing features of a traditional family we agree that intergenerational continuity constitutes its basis which is reflected in occupational choice, housekeeping, cultural and traditional attitudes, and in the whole way of life. A traditional family pattern is characterised by relationship of solidarity and mutual obligations. Multigenerational family pattern in the system of primogenitors – parents used to be always strong. Thanks to close family relationship as samples of behaviour the child took on the full behavioural role model from primogenitors and parents (Kovaleva, 2015, 266). In a modern family intergenerational continuity has already become outdated. Absence of relationship between generations on the one hand is a tragedy, on the other it is tough objective necessity for the existence of the modern family unit. After all acceleration of socio-economic development of modern society reduces the importance of experience of previous generations. Today we witness that the process of socialisation of the rising generation is characterised by orientation primarily to peers (similarity of interests, social and professional experience) not to parents. Thus, in the course of personal and professional development parental influence becomes less significant and at the same time immediate influence of other social groups and peers increases. It leads to the growing influence of non-family groups and generation gap. According to philosophers crisis comes when “the system of beliefs of former generations loses the importance for new generations, and the person appears to be without world” (Ortega y Gasset, 1989, 21). Social anomia at the individual level is shaped into personal catastrophe because of destruction of the world outlook and behavioural stereotypes which are basic for the life activity of any person (Zhulaeva, 2015, 115).

In addition, transformations of Russian society at the beginning of 1990s made apparent another problem of value orientation of the modern family unit. Old socialist society values were changed for new market-focused values. It led to the conflict of traditional values and the so-called “new world outlook” trends. However, the system of new epoch values has not

been generated yet, the system of the old society values has already being “washed away”. In modern Russian society this contradiction is reflected in co-existence of specific market-orientation values (inviolability of private property, tendency to maximize profits, free market cult, survival of the strongest) and democratic ones (equality, freedom, social responsibility, general welfare) (Karnaukhova, 2006, 28).

The new social order caused by processes taking place in modern postindustrial societies differs from the former public forms, first of all, by the increased role of the individual in social structure. In this way, as the present technological revolution constitutes the basis for the material component of social transformation, and technological progress stimulates constant necessity for qualified workers, education and self-education gain in importance as the major factors providing social status and recognition to the person (Kusina, Vinokurova, 2009, 158).

Modern family pattern promotes such system of values in which freedom of individual choice is put above everything else. The above mentioned position is well reflected in some works. The degree of freedom of choice for individuals has extremely increased in modern society, while the bonds connecting them with system of social obligations have distinctly weakened (Fukuyama, 2004, 48). Similar tendencies lead to the following negative phenomenon in family relations –responsibility for well-being, life and health of people which due to various circumstances do not have possibilities to provide worthy existence without custody (orphanages, retirement homes) is transferred to the state. One of the reasons of such behaviour is the so called effect of moral miniaturization. “While people continue to participate in group life, the authority of groups and the radius of trust connected with it have decreased”. Thus, the general values which could be shared by members of society became less apparent, and group rivalry became more noticeable (Fukuyama, 2004, 48).

Changes of traditional matrimonial patterns, expectations from the spouse and women double employment have considerably reduced traditional male domination within the family unit. And we can better understand that the traditional family pattern, in which duties were divided between a man and a woman, ceased practically to exist. The modern economic conditions characterised by prevalence of brainwork over physical one allow the woman to turn from a cook and laundress into a competitive unit in the labour market and force to reconsider usual division of labour between sexes. Now women actively master trades which were earlier accessible to men only. Swift social evolution is at the heart of this process. This evolution manifests itself in the specific character of the process of socialisation and forms certain psychological traits at a successful person by his or her midlife (35 years) irrespective of sex (Sinkovskaya, 2011, 88). The research concludes that the Russian women (business-women) tend to generally admit at themselves certain male qualities which are revealed both in professional and private life (Sinkovskaya, 2011, 89).

Other resources point out similar changes, namely, active labour involvement of women affected interpersonal relations between a man and a woman, marriage and family relationships. Having got the equal rights the woman changed her opinion on family life and childbirth (Ushkova-Borisova, 2011, 132). But there exists another result of women double employment. Meanwhile women are engaged in housekeeping to much greater extent than men are and female housekeeping employment considerably exceeds the male one. According to Chernyak time effort difference in housekeeping for women and men accounts for from 2 to 3 times (Chernyak, 2004, 218). Here again the major dilemma of life of a modern woman is displayed – “family life and work”. It leads to the necessity to much greater extent to combine various roles behaviour. Thereof male discontent for the lack of attention to him and children appears. The woman was given the opportunity to be employed but still she has to go on with housekeeping according to traditional behaviour pattern. Her everyday life is full of heaps of housework (Kubanova, 2011, 76). At present due to

economic reasons in many cases a woman cannot simply choose between her career and her family life. The results of the research carried out among students show domination of egalitarian orientations at girls/women: “Female students plan to gain certain social and economic status with the help of education. The family life (motherhood) in the system of traditional female values is pushed to the sidelines giving way to professional sphere” (Sinkovskaya, 2010, 90).

Family functions have been changed. Importance and necessity of the family unit as a social institution is well traced only through its societal functions. It is obvious that family functions depend on public relations in general and the level of cultural development of the society in particular. In this connection during a certain historical period and due to certain social and economic conditions family function increases or decreases.

First of all, reproductive and educational functions of the family unit have been changed. It stands to reason that hierarchy of family functions of the modern family unit and traditional one are obviously different. At present we witness some imbalance between reproductive and educational functions as well as the function of social control which were previously balanced. To give birth to the child and to pay less attention to the child’s upbringing is to some extent irresponsible. A modern person puts his or her own interests above all, thus individualism prevails. The modern family pattern is characterised by dramatic decrease in the educational potential of a family unit as well as joint activity of parents and children (Kovaleva, 2015, 269).

The following major family functions have undergone considerable changes: household function (housekeeping, budget, the consumption and leisure activities) and economic one (material maintenance of a family, economic support of minors and disabled members of a family, accumulation and descent of material welfare). Modern family members are always short of time; and improvement of life quality in Russian cities and towns considerably limits household family function and even reduces it to minimum of domestic consumption. After all for family life a certain way of life, fair distribution of family duties, cooperativeness in housekeeping which promote shaping and satisfaction of material needs of a person, generating and supporting of certain household traditions are of fundamental importance. The system of social and economic requirements and moral attitudes of family members, personal life goals, likes and dislikes, characters and ideals on the one hand and subjective features of family members, their consumption needs, level of cultural development, national and ethnic difference on the other influence economic function of the family unit. (Panteleev, Chervyakova, 2001, 75)

Transformation of economic function exemplifies reduction of classical institutional family functions and other social institutions start to perform this function due to many reasons. It is not uncommon that in the postindustrial society the family unit transfers the responsibility to take care of their elderly relatives and disabled to state public institutions, such as Department of Health or Department of Human Services. In addition, unemployment benefits help to provide temporary and partial income to people who lost their permanent job. The social insurance fund provides family members with welfare payments for treatment, rehabilitation and health improvement. Thereby, it is precisely social institutions that instead of the family unit support economically disadvantaged people accepting inherent family responsibilities.

Transformation of the modern family unit is reflected in transformation of family ideology as well. For example, feminist ideology considers the family unit as an amplification of the female exploitation and strives to create such forms of family relations which would at most counterbalance the rights and duties of spouses. Progressive ideology confirms supremacy of the family institution as the union of companions based on mutual respect, sympathy and love.

## **Conclusion and Recommendation for Further Research**

The traditional family unit which is patriarchal, with many children, expanded, with localisation of residence and prevalence of economic, ascriptive and reproductive functions has being replaced by modern, multivariate family type model. From our standpoint the characteristic features of the above mentioned model appear to be the following: egalitarianism and detachment, as well as predominance of late marriages with fewer children, increase in divorce rates, informal and alternative marriages (cohabitation, guest marriages, group marriages, etc.) (Malimonov, Sinkovskaya, Rakhinskiy, Korol, 2015, 114). Here it is necessary to mention other models – bigamy (when the second family is deliberately created) and increase in quantity of single-mother families (when motherhood out of marriage is deliberately chosen by the woman).

The existing opinions about transformations of the family unit can be divided into two groups: the first group supports the idea that the modern family unit is in crisis; and the second group supports the idea that the process going on is nothing but evolutionary one and we witness formation and realisation of the new family model relations.

We should also recognise that the existing types of marriages and their alternative are far not static. Considering the tempo of transformations in modern society we can expect appearance of new forms of relations between a man and a woman with the tendency of free choice and refusal from a future spouse or just a partner. Even nowadays we can already witness new and absolutely unusual for Russian society family relations:

- Open marriages (spouses tolerate voluntary sexual intercourse outside the family);
- Interrupting marriages (spouses tolerate to separate for a certain period of time (a week, a month, half a year) for various reasons – tiredness from each other, long business trips. And the separation is perceived not as a tragedy and rupture of relations but as norm and short interruption in relations);
- The “Swedish” family (sexual union of several men and women).

It is impossible to guarantee that in the nearest future some other unusual types of relations will not appear. In future the family unit in any form will exist but it is simply impossible meanwhile to predict in which one.

Thus, on the basis of the analysis in conclusion it is necessary to notice that changes in existing family relations are the result of the sum total of factors. Among them are: patrimonial unit (features of the parental house: family traditions, relations of parents as spouses, the relation of parents to the child); immediate environment; mass media; literature and folklore; other social institutions, etc. And one of the challenges of modern Russian society is advancing education in the sphere of family culture in rising generation. After all it has now become clear that Russian society lacks information about regular positive families which could serve as the examples of the classical, traditional family unit; such type of the family unit which gives force to the child, protects the child, which brings up the independent, full-fledged, self-sufficient person focused not only on individualism but capable to support paternalistic values that constitute the basis for the healthy, full-fledged society and state. Here again we can accept opinion on development of a society in the conditions of globalization to changes in family institution: “the matter is that loss of identity and historical consciousness inevitability results in destruction of the whole system of a life. We live not only a momentary life, it is important for us to comprehend a plan” (Rakhinskiy, 2015, 143).

For Russian children and grandchildren to be able to accept Russian traditions and moral values and to become valuable citizens of Russia we are obliged to create such information environment that would educate new generations on spiritual values, patterns of behaviour



corresponding to national Russian culture in which the strong harmonious family unit has always been of utmost importance for family policy.

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