



# STAGES OF FORMATION OF PSYCHOLOGY OF THE FAMILY AS A FIELD OF SCIENTIFIC KNOWLEDGE

O. Posvistak

Khmelnytskyi National University  
11, Instytutaska Str., Khmelnytskyi 29016 Ukraine  
posvistak\_olesia@ukr.net

**Abstract.** The main periods of formation of psychology of the family as a field of science are traced in the article on the basis of analysis of scientific literature. 4 stages are highlighted and the researchers' contribution to the development of psychology of the family on every stage is shown. It is found that the development process of psychology of the family occurred in relation with other sciences: philosophy, anthropology, sociology, etc., and within other fields of psychological knowledge: social psychology, personality psychology, etc. It is proved that the introduction and development of psychology of the family as a field of science occurred in close connection with the solving of practical problems.

**Keywords:** marriage, family, psychology of the family, history of the family, sociology of the family, social psychology, personality psychology, educational psychology, psycho dynamics itself, psychotherapy.

## Introduction

The evolution of the family is clearly traced in the modern world: marital, parental and other important social roles rapidly change, filling with new content that actualizes a research interest to their study and the necessity to understand the key processes that are being experienced by the family is growing. Scientific reconstruction of the main stages of formation of marriage and family relations psychology will help the researcher to navigate himself consciously in the preconditions and origins of modern state of marriage and family relations, to provide him with the tool for efficient search of promising ways of solving family and marriage problems. It demonstrates the importance and relevance of family cycle study with the aim of creating a complete theory of family functioning as well as for practical work: counseling, educational activities, preparing young people to entering to marriage and so on.

Despite a significant number of works devoted to problems of psychology of the family, the fundamental researches of the formation process of this sphere of scientific knowledge in our country are still missing. Hence there is a need to study the problem of psychology of the family emergence and the reconstruction of the main stages of its formation. Scientists studied the stages of familistics emergence. G. Christensen, A. Mineeva and A. G. Lidars (Mineeva, Lidars, 2011) distinguish 4 developmental stages of science about family. A. Kholmogorova (Kholmogorova, 2007), E. Eydemiller and V. Yustitskis (Eydemiller, Yustitskis, 2002) traced the main stages of psychotherapy development, which became the basis for the development of psychology of the family and were evolving in close connection with it. However, a holistic study of the main stages of psychology of the family formation is still missing, with this context, the purpose of this article is to highlight the main stages of psychology of the family formation as a field of family science.

## Method

The analysis of scientific literature has become the main method of the research; the accumulated experience has been studied basing on the systematic, scientific approach that has allowed to reveal general regularities of psychology of the family formation as a scientific field and to highlight the main stages of this process.

## Discussion

Based on the analysis of scientific literature it was ascertained that certain ideas about marriage and family were expressed in the ancient times: ideas of the philosophers had a significant influence on the formation of later ideas about marriage and family relationships. So, Plato thought about the family-rising in ideal state, and under the direct influence of his ideas the utopian constructions of the Renaissance (XVI – XVII centuries) (T. Campanella) and later the system of the utopians of the nineteenth century (Sh. Fourier

and R. Owen) were formed. It should be mentioned that before the nineteenth century the problems of the family were discussed by philosophers mostly in the context of studying the problems of state and law. The first to speak about the importance of family for the individual and society was O. Kont (1798-1857) (Mineeva, Lidars, 2011).

Thus, the period from antiquity to the nineteenth century is the first stage in the development of the study of family problems, which can be conditionally called pre-scientific.

Anthropologists and ethnographers had been studying the family the most actively since the mid-nineteenth to the early twentieth century. It is the period of time that can be identified as the second stage of formation of psychology of the family as a scientific field. The first systematic study of family problems arose at this time, and anthropological concepts, that have retained their importance until today, formed the conceptual apparatus of the future psychology of the family. Classical work of Swiss historian of law Y. Bachofen "Maternal law" (1884) initiated the study of history of the family.

At the end of the nineteenth century the sociology of the family began to emerge, that moved to the study of the social world through the interrelation of personal and social through the prism of family mediation. The work "Introduction to Sociology of the Family" by E. Durkheim (1888) laid the foundation to the sociological branch of family study. E. Durkheim along with F. LePle is considered to be a pioneer of study of the family.

A numerous series of social changes that lead to the change of family itself took place in the nineteenth century and there appeared a need to provide psychological assistance to the family that in its turn contributed to the emergence of interest to the psychological study of family problems. At the same time there happened an intensification of psychological research and establishment of psychology as an independent experimental science. The changes of the structure and functions of the family created a need to build matrimonial and child-parent relationship on a new basis, which in its turn produced the request to study of regularity of interpersonal relationships in the family, family relationships from the point of view of sustainability and stability, peculiarities of the influence of family structure on the interfamilial processes, individual behavior in the family; regularities of formation, functioning and disintegration of the family as group entirety. At this time, there arose a need for practical work with families, diagnostics in the therapeutic rebuilding of family relationships between parents and children, spouses, siblings, etc. (Antonov, Medkov, 1996, p. 23).

The attention should be paid to the fact that the first attempts to examine some problems of psychology of the family were made in the nineteenth century. Thus, in 1817 in Russia F.I. Uden was one of the first who drew attention to the parents' attitude to the child and its influence on the formation of the psyche. In the last quarter of XIX century the "family diagnostics" and "family treatment" doctrines of different mental states appeared. I. Malyarevskiy was the real founder of family psychiatry in Russia and one of the first in the world. He founded the medical-educational institution for mentally disabled children in 1882 in St. Petersburg where great attention was paid to the diagnostics of relationships in families of mentally ill people and studied the role of improper upbringing in forming various manifestations of mental illness. Sessions that can be considered as the prototypes of family therapy were held with patients' relatives. In 1886 the first in the world monograph on psychopathy, written by V. Bekhterev was published in which, in particular, the existence of "acquired psychopathy" as a result of improper treatment of parents to a child was admitted. The typology of distorted kinds of educational influence of parents on children has been developed in the works of Sikorskiy (1899). M. Richmond in the monograph "Social Diagnosis" (1917) was one of the first who stressed the need to pay attention to the relationships and psychological climate in the family. (Eydemiller, Yustitskis, 2002).

The researches in social psychology, personality psychology, educational psychology, and so on became the theoretical basis of psychology of the family. Social psychology, basing on the ideas that family is a small group, is studying the role structure of the family and the leadership in the family, the stage-by-stage approach to the development of the family as a group, the problem of choosing a mate, the problems of family cohesion, family conflicts and the ways of their solution. A person in the context of family relationships, processes of interpersonal relations, the family as a small group and the relationships in it are the objects of the study in the family from the point of view of social psychology (Antonov, Medkov, 1996, p. 23).

The system of scientific knowledge, acquired in different areas of psychological knowledge, practice and experience in providing psychological assistance to families and family counseling have established the theoretical basis of contemporary family psychology, an urgent task of which is the integration of knowledge about the family and the practical experience of work with family in the holistic psychological discipline – the psychology of the family (Karabanova, 2005, p. 7).

A systematic study of the problems of family psychology began in the late 20s – early 30s of XX century and this period can be considered as the beginning of the third stage of formation of psychology of the family as a scientific field. In our opinion, it is a social demand for the optimization of family life, enhancing the effectiveness of marital interaction and parent-child relationship, solving the problems of education of children in the family, that has accelerated the development and process of institutionalization, thus the knowledge gained in other sciences and branches of psychology were not able to solve the existing problems.

The demand for family therapy in almost all countries of the world has been increasing since the mid-1940s. This is due to the fact that the Second World War caused the destructive processes in families, technological progress, rapid changes in society, the explosion in the birth rate led to the spread of delinquent behavior among adolescents and the increasing number of divorces, that's why family became the object of increased attention. Family people began to turn to professionals with complaints on emotional problems more often. Many experts preferred the study of the individual in the family context, continuing to work with private individuals (Braun, Kristensen, 2001).

Family therapy was emerging and psychology of the family started to form a separate scientific field in 50s of XX century. Consequently, this date can be considered as the beginning of the fourth stage of the formation of psychology of the family. The basis for the exuding of this phase became the transition of family therapists and psychologists from the work with an individual to the work with family system (Braun, Kristensen, 2001). A distinctive feature of psychology of the family as a scientific field became its inextricable link with psychological practice, solution of practical problems in the process of psychological counseling and psychotherapy (Karabanova, 2005, p. 3). The rapid development of practice made popular the development of scientific researches in the field of family that led to the formation of independent special psychological discipline – Psychology of the Family (Karabanova, 2005, p. 281). March, 1957 is considered to be the date of the official birth of family therapy, when J. Spiegel organized the first section of family therapy at the conference in Los Angeles. At that time the term “family therapy” was used for the first time at the nationwide conferences (Beyker, Varha, 2005).

The fourth stage can be divided into the following sub-periods:

a) The beginning of the 1950s - the emergence of family therapy. Psychiatrists, mostly analysts by training, the first ideas of the importance of the family in the treatment of mental illnesses appeared and the first attempts to involve the whole family into psychotherapeutic work were made.

b) Starting from 1960 - the researches of micro dynamics which were hold by a group in Palo Alto were in the center of attention. According to the most important strategic tasks the change of pathological interactions took place while working with family. The book of D.Jackson and G. Bateson “Pragmatists about family communication” was considered to be the best seller of the 1960s.

c) The 1970s were the beginning of creation of family consultations, where family therapists were trying to work with the entire family as with the integrity. Structural paradigm replaced communicative one, and the aspect of family system structure was coming to the front. The book “Family and family therapy” by S. Minuhina became the best seller in the 1980s. Children clinic in Philadelphia, where S. Minuhin worked, became the most important center of family psychology and family therapy development in the 1970s.

Also systemic family therapy of M. Bowen reached its maturity at this time. N. Bowen, psychoanalyst by training, was the first who began to explore the factor of macro dynamics of family system by proposing genogram method. The 1970s was also the high noon of humanistic psychology and psychotherapy, which could not but affected the trends in family psychology. Existential-humanistic ideas of K. Wtaker and V. Satir led to the development of theory of the meeting, which declares that family therapy should help to meet people who notwithstanding living together, have no emotional contact and in this sense do not see or understand each other. The aspect of family ideology – rules, norms and values of the family system, appears in the center of humanistic-existential branch.

d) In the 1980s structural psychotherapy was criticized because of its simplicity and rigidity, and strategic approach came to the forefront. Strategists actively took into account both the structure and micro and macro dynamics of the system. It should be noted that the main difference of the strategic approach is in the methods of the research. It was publicly proclaimed that the customers do not necessarily know that strategic goal, which is guided by the therapist in the course of his work. An important aspect of the strategic approach was pragmatism - the work was carried out mostly directly with symptoms, which family appealed

to, on the basis of reframing, usually quite manipulatively. Milton Erickson suggested a big number of techniques aimed at the weakening of the resistance during psychotherapy.

e) Since the second half of 1990 the influence of constructivism significantly increases, primarily because of cognitive psychology and cognitive psychotherapy. The pioneer of cognitive-behavioral approach to the study of the family was A. Ellis, who noted that marital dysfunctions arise in those cases where the partners hold unrealistic perceptions about their relationships and are prone to exaggerate negative assessment of the partner.

The aspect of ideology comes to the forefront according to constructivist-oriented branch - work with the principles and believes of participants of the system is done with the aim of greater mutual consistency of these principles, and also correction of different distortions of thinking (Kholmohorova, 2007).

### Conclusion

Based on the analysis of the scientific literature it was found that in the process of formation of psychology of the family as the scientific field the following stages can be underlined:

1. From ancient times to the nineteenth century – pre scientific.
2. XIX century – 20 – 30s of XX century – the beginning of a systematic study of family problems within different sciences; beginning of psychological study of family problems.
3. 20 – 30s – 50s of XX century – the beginning of a systematic study of psychology of the family within other fields of psychological knowledge.
4. From 50s of XX century – the emergence of family therapy and the beginning of the separation of psychology of the family into a separate science.

The study of regional formation peculiarities of psychology of the family and analysis of the contribution of individual scientists and scientific schools into this process, in our opinion, will be perspective in future.

### References:

- Antonov, A. I. and Medkov, V. M. (1996). *Sotsyolohiya sem'yi* [Sociology of the Family]. Moscow: MHU.
- Eydemyller, E.H. and Yustytskys, V. (2002). *Psykhologhyya y psykhoterapyia sem'yi* [Family psychology and psychotherapy]. (3rd ed.). St. Petersburg: Pyter.
- Beyker, K. and Varha, A. (2005). (Eds.). *Teoriya semeynykh system Myurreya Bouena: Osnovnye ponyatiya, metody i klynycheskaya praktika* [The family systems theory of Murray Bowen: Main concepts, methods, clinical practice]. Moscow: Cogito-Centre.
- Braun, G. and Krystensen, D. (2001). *Teoryya y praktyka semeynoy psykhoterapyi* [Theory and practice of family therapy]. St.-Petersbug: Pyter.
- Karabanova, O. (2005). *Psykhologhyya semeynykh otnoshenyy y osnovy semeynoho konsul'tyrovanyya* [Family psychology and basics of family counseling]. Moscow: Hardaryky.
- Mineeva, O.A. and Liders, A.H. (2011). Famylystyka. Obzor nauchnykh predstavlenyy o sem'e [Family studies. Overview of scientific concepts of family]. *Sotsyal'nyy psykholoh. – Social psychologist*. 1 (21), 19 – 59.
- Kholmohorova, A. B. (2007). Semeynaya psykhoterapiya: ystoriya, osnovnie shkoly, kontseptual'niy apparat [Family therapy: history, basic schools, the conceptual apparatus]. *Terapiya psykhycheskykh rasstroystv. – Therapy of mental disorders*. (2), pp. 19–29.