

# A BSTRACTS

## **GENDER RELATIONS IN THE PRIVATE SPHERE: POST-SOVIET TRANSFORMATIONS OF FAMILY AND INTIMACY**

**Irina Tartakovskaya**

Introduction to a thematic issue of the same title. As gender studies emerged and became institutionalized in the post-Soviet countries in the 1990s, their understanding of the private broadened. Nevertheless, scholars of gender have so far paid more attention to public gender roles and images. This issue aims to fill that gap. Globalization increases the significance of the private sphere: market-driven consumerism and the individualization and pluralization of lifestyles constitute the private in opposition to the public. Post-Soviet capitalism increases the significance of the private even further: the private sphere is experienced as a refuge from the threats of the public sphere, and new private practices are combined with styles of behavior inherited from communist times.

## **YOUNG ADULTS: MARRIAGE, DOMESTIC PARTNERSHIP, AND PARENTHOOD. DISCURSIVE PRESCRIPTIONS AND PRACTICES IN CONTEMPORARY RUSSIA**

**Zhanna Chernova, Larisa Shpakovskaya**

The article analyzes norms of spousal and parental behavior represented in Russian family law and contrasts them with the meanings young people invest in partnership, matrimony, and parenthood. Federal legislation and interviews with young middle-class residents of Saint Petersburg serve to explore similarities and differences between official discourse and young people's everyday views of their obligations and freedoms. The article discusses the applicability of the concept of a second demographic transition to gender relations in Russia. The subjects of the Russian demographic shift are young adults who, official discourse notwithstanding,

base their reproductive decisions on professional, social, and economic status rather than age.

### **SHOULD I SEND MY CHILD TO KINDERGARTEN, AND SHOULD I PAY THE TEACHER? PARENTING, GENDER, AND PRESCHOOL EDUCATIONAL INSTITUTIONS IN INTERNET FORUMS**

**Yulia Gradskova**

Using discussions in the online forums of the Russian parenting web sites *materinstvo.ru*, *mamka.ru*, and *nanya.ru*, the paper analyzes gender aspects of parental attitudes toward institutions of preschool education and communication between parents regarding their interaction with such institutions. The forums show that, widespread criticism of state-run collective preschool education notwithstanding, contemporary Russian views of involved motherhood and child welfare assume that children should be enrolled in kindergartens for long periods of time. Mothers view such institutions as crucial for their children's everyday welfare. They are expected not only to ensure supervision, but also to foster children's development, teach them to communicate with peers, and familiarize them with societal norms. The forums also show that child-rearing continues to be viewed as a female task, and mothers often feel the need to justify their decision to send their child to preschool.

### **THE EXPERIENCE OF PARENTING AND GROWING UP AS IMMIGRANTS: DISCOURSE ANALYSIS OF CHILD-REARING PRACTICES IN RUSSIAN-ISRAELI FAMILIES**

**Claudia Zbenovich**

The paper studies socio-linguistic aspects of the interaction between Russian-Jewish immigrants with an intelligentsia background who came to Israel in the early 1990s and learned Hebrew, and their young Israeli-born children aged between 6 and 10. The choice of language plays a crucial role in intergenerational communication. The parents choose to speak Russian because they strive to instill late-Soviet cultural models in their children through everyday discourse. In doing so, they resort to authoritarian models of speech behavior, implicitly criticizing the egalitarian parent-child relations prevalent in wider Israeli society. By switching to Hebrew, children acquire a more adult position vis-à-vis their parents: they become discursively influential and turn into partners in the conversation. In this way, children destroy their parents' representations of what a parent-child conversation should be like and what kind of speech behavior children should adopt.

## **WHAT HOME MEANS TO THE NOMAD**

**Olga Brednikova, Olga Tkach**

An exploration of the meanings female migrants attribute to the concept of Home, the paper is based on ethnographic fieldwork among female migrant laborers from several post-Soviet republics who live and work in Saint Petersburg. The paper describes their everyday practices of “home production.” Three intersecting levels of understanding the Home may be singled out. In order of spatial extension, these are (1) the Home as a dwelling, (2) the Home as a place of residence, meaning in this case the city of Saint Petersburg, and (3) the home country or “the Home that remained back home.” The study shows that the Home loses its significance as a private space for female migrant laborers. They abandon privacy in favor of integration and economic efficiency. The main features they seek in a home are proximity to the workplace and cheapness. Their home is as mobile and delocalized as the migrants themselves. The life stories of the women interviewed present scenarios of individualization, of liberation from social forms and types of stability that are characteristic of modernity. Female migrant laborers are an unlikely yet striking example of the postmodern nomadic subject.

## **TRANSFORMING THE GENDER REGIME: AN ETHNOSOCIOLOGICAL ANALYSIS OF MODERNIZATION IN THE NORTH CAUCASUS**

**Tatyana Lytkina**

Based on four consecutive summers of fieldwork in a small mountain village in Dagestan, this paper analyzes power relations and gender roles in a traditional North Caucasian Muslim family, their dynamics, and the reasons for their contemporary reproduction or transformation. An ethnographic account of life in the village and biographical interviews with three generations of women from a typical family serve to explore women’s positions of power within the household as well as the transformation of women’s status and role in the family and the wider village community in the context of a difficult transition from a subsistence economy to a market system. Women’s status is linked to economic and social relations in the village and the family’s place in society. Social change and the transformation of the gender regime prompt young women to question traditional power relations (submission to elders and men).

## **EXPANDING ETHNIC AND CONFESSIONAL BORDERS: MARRIAGES BETWEEN TAJIK WOMEN AND FOREIGN MEN**

**Sofia Kasymova**

In Tajikistan, even within the seemingly unitary Tajik ethnic majority, models of matrimony range from marriages arranged by parents to women freely choosing their

marriage partner. The study is based on interviews with Tajik women who married non-Muslim foreigners and, in most cases, moved to their husband's home country. The rise in cross-confessional and cross-ethnic intermarriage is due to contemporary Tajik women's increased social and geographic mobility compared to previous generations. The new private practices and strategies illustrate the growth of individualism. Women's free personal choice of a husband, which may be motivated either by the search for material support or by a desire to satisfy their own emotional needs, is actively opposed to the dictates of the family, *avlod* (clan), community, or state. At the same time, Tajik society increasingly accepts the value of individuals, including women.

### **SHIFT-F2: THE INTERNET, MASS MEDIA, AND FEMALE-TO-FEMALE INTIMATE RELATIONS IN KRASNOYARSK AND NOVOSIBIRSK**

**Tatiana Barchunova, Oksana Parfenova**

The paper studies patterns of female-to-female intimacy, conceptualized under the heading Shift-F2, where F2 stands for stable or fairly regular sexual relations between women, and Shift designates a transition to such relations. The study is based on interviews with women from Novosibirsk and Krasnoyarsk as well as online forums and mass media. Consumer-oriented mass media and show business exploit the topic of female homosexual intimacy, presenting it as an extension of the admissible range of sexual pleasures. Internet communication transforms dating rituals and is conducive to Shift-F2 scenarios of sexual behavior. However, the Internet also imposes structural limitations because of the mediated nature of first contact, which brings with it an increased need for mutual trust.