

INNOVATIVE MEANS OF COMPREHENSIVE INFLUENCE ON THE DYNAMICS OF FAMILY PROBLEMS

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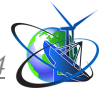
Abstract. *The article is devoted to a comprehensive analysis of the impact of clinical psychology, energy practices, and conscious approaches on improving the dynamics of family relationships, with a special emphasis on the author's FEIR-Method: Conscious Family Integration. The purpose of the article is to identify the features of key areas of improving family dynamics in the USA using various approaches. In the course of the scientific study, general scientific methods of cognition were used: analysis, synthesis, induction, deduction, comparison, modeling, interpretation, and generalization. The results of the study show that the modern American family functions as a dynamic biopsychosocial system in which culture, values, emotional, and physiological mechanisms interact. It has been proven that marital interaction, emotional co-regulation, biopsychosocial coherence, and shared meaning-making are the foundation for maintaining stability and psychological security in the family. Special attention is paid to the systemic (biopsychosocial) approach, where the family is considered as a living dynamic system of interacting processes. Of particular value is the study of neurobehavioral reformatting, which demonstrates how cognitive, affective, physiological, and behavioral mechanisms interact at the neural level. It is concluded that rethinking the meaning of events, modulation of emotional state, regulation of bodily reactions, and formation of adaptive behavior lead to the formation of stable patterns of self-regulation. It has been shown that the coordinated work of different parts of the brain helps a person better manage their thoughts, feelings and actions. Thanks to this, partners in a couple become calmer, understand each other better and conflict less often. Modern methods of working with deep feelings in married couples were analyzed. These include exercises for awareness of one's experiences, methods of working with the body, techniques for reducing tension and approaches that combine several methods at once. The practical significance of the study is that it helps to apply simple and holistic methods of psychological support for families and married couples.*

Keywords: *family, marital relations, neurobiology, cultural factors, FEIR-Method.*

Introduction

In recent decades, family relationships in the United States have undergone significant demographic and social transformations, which are reflected in changes in marriage and divorce rates. According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention [5], in 2023, about 2 million marriages were registered in the United States (marriage rate - 6.1 per 1,000 population) and 672,500 divorces (rate - 2.4 per 1,000 population). Although current divorce rates are lower compared to the peak values of the late twentieth century, these indicators remain socially significant [5].

A long-term historical perspective allows us to better understand the scale and



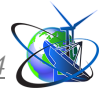
nature of these changes in the coming years. According to the National Center for Family & Marriage Research [4], the divorce rate among women in the United States has increased almost fourfold, from 4.1 per 1,000 married women in 1900 to 14.6 in 2022. In addition, NCFMR data reveal significant social differentiation of divorce rates by race, ethnicity and education level, indicating an uneven distribution of family risks across social groups. The combination of these trends creates a pressing problem: family instability is a widespread phenomenon that requires constant analysis and development of effective preventive and supportive approaches by the state and professionals working in the private sector [4].

Literature Review

The issue of the importance of clinical psychology, energy practices, and conscious approaches in improving family dynamics is sufficiently covered in foreign scientific literature. A significant contribution to the development of the topic has been made by authors such as K. Breiner, J. Lansford, A. Skinner, L. Steinberg, M. Bornstein, K. Deater-Deckard, K. Dodge, W. Rothenberg [2], M. Bámaca-Colbert, C. Henry, N. Perez-Brena, J. Gayles, G. Martinez [1], J. Ochsner and J. Gross [10], A. Hartman [6], who analyze the role of cultural orientations and values in the formation of behavioral patterns in the family. From a clinical-psychological perspective, family therapy is studied by J. Kaminski, L. Robinson, H. Hutchins, K. Newsome, C. Barry [9] and A. Schreiber, A. Wright, J. Beeney, S. Stepp, L. Scott, P. Pilkonis, M. Hallquist [12], T. Irvine, P. Peluso, K. Benson, C. Cole, D. Cole, J. Gottman, J. Schwartz Gottman [7].

Among the authors who highlight conscious approaches to improving interaction in a couple, it is worth highlighting J. Carson, K. Carson, K. Gil, D. Baucom [3]. In the field of energy practices, the contribution of S. Jain, R. Hammerschlag, P. Mills, L. Cohen, R. Krieger, C. Vieten, S. Lutgendorf [8] is important.

Interdisciplinary approaches that combine neurobiology and psychotherapy are addressed by D. Siegel and C. Drulis [13], T. Robles, R. Slatcher, J. Trombello, M. McGinn [11], who highlight the connection between the quality of marital relationships and the physical health of partners.



The study also used expert literature, including publications in modern online publications, in particular: CDC statistics [5], BGSU [4], as well as the Cultural Formulation Interview clinical tools [14].

Despite the sufficient amount of literature on this topic, there is a lack of systematic material on the topic of the study, and therefore, using various methods of scientific knowledge, the information was analyzed, grouped, systematized and presented in the light of the research topic. The scientific novelty of the topic lies in the consideration of innovative practices for strengthening marriage, which are based on a combination of psychology, energy practices and training.

The purpose of the article is to identify the features of key areas for improving family dynamics in the United States using different approaches.

Research Results The family institution is a basic social institution that functions as an organized system of interconnected roles, norms and practices aimed at the socialization, support and development of individuals throughout the life cycle. Unequivocally, the family is formed on the basis of a common culture, shared values and a set of social factors that unite its members into a holistic system of interaction. The main factors that unite the family are presented in Table 1.

Culture plays a crucial role in the formation and functioning of the family institution in the United States, especially in the context of immigrant or ethnoracially diverse families. According to the family systems approach, the family is viewed as an organized whole in which changes at the level of one member or subsystem (e.g., the parent-child dyad) have consequences for the entire system [1]. During adolescence, the processes of cultural orientation and identity formation intensify, which is associated with increased autonomy, expanded social contacts outside the family, and active participation in the dominant culture [1]. Values and social factors concretize cultural influence, determining patterns of parenting and child development in American families. In the United States, cultural values are often analyzed through the prism of individualism and collectivism [2], which is reflected in child-rearing practices. For example, parents who are focused on self-development usually focus on developing independence, responsibility, and leadership qualities.



Table 1 – Factors that unite the family

Group of factors	Content
Cultural	Culture structures family functioning by defining norms, roles, and interaction patterns. Cultural orientations, ethnic and racial identity, and intergenerationally transmitted scripts shape family processes, particularly under conditions of migration or ethno-racial diversity [1]. Cultural context is central to understanding relational and psychological functioning within families [13].
Value-based	Value-based factors include individualistic and collectivistic orientations, beliefs about autonomy and interdependence, and expectations regarding family obligations [2]
Social	Social factors manifest cultural and value orientations through parenting styles, control and monitoring practices, and socialization processes shaped by school, peers, and socioeconomic context [9].
Interpersonal (marital)	Marital quality is determined by stable interaction patterns, including support, conflict, and cooperation, as well as the emotional tone of communication, which collectively predict relationship stability and well-being [11].
Emotional-regulatory	Emotional-regulatory processes involve empathy, emotional support, and shared coping with stress, mediating the association between everyday interactions and long-term relationship stability [10].
Biopsychological and physiological	Physiological co-regulation between partners, reflected in synchronized autonomic responses, supports emotional closeness, whereas disrupted synchrony is associated with relational distress [12].
Systemic (biopsychosocial)	Family functioning reflects dynamic interactions among biological, psychological, social, and cultural processes within an integrated biopsychosocial system [9].
Identification and meaning-making	Shared values, narratives, and symbols support the construction of individual and relational identity and provide a foundation for psychological safety and adaptability of the family system [13].

Note: Compiled and expanded upon: Bámaca-Colbert et al. [1], Breiner et al. [2], Schreiber et al. [12], Siegel, Drulis [13]

At the same time, collectivist values are associated with an emphasis on family responsibilities, mutual support, and cohesion [2], all of which affect the development of family relationships between adults. Interpersonal interactions in marriage are a key mechanism through which the stability and quality of the family are formed. The quality of marriage is determined not by individual events, but by a set of recurring patterns of interaction, including the level of support, the intensity of conflict, the presence of hostile or cooperative behaviors, and the overall emotional tone of communication. High marital quality is associated with the prevalence of positive interactions, emotional support, and constructive conflict resolution strategies, while low quality is characterized by chronic tension, negative attributions toward the partner, and hostile behavior patterns [11]. The emotional patterns of the spouses



additionally determine the long-term quality of family relationships, as they mediate both the level of social support and stress responses [11].

From the perspective of interpersonal neurobiology, relationships are viewed not as the sum of separate individuals, but as a living, dynamic system in which biological, psychological, social, and cultural processes mutually co-create each other. Siegel D., Drulis C. [13] argue that the psyche is not reduced to brain activity, but is a reactive property of energy and information flows that are simultaneously embodied and relational. In this approach, consciousness, emotions, identity, and regulation arise not only “within” a person, but in the field of interaction between people. Accordingly, close relationships – in particular, family and marital – function as biologically and culturally integrated systems in which neural integration, emotional disposition, shared symbols, values, and meanings form a single process of self-regulation and development [13].

Modern research on marital and partnership relationships convincingly demonstrates that the influence of partners on each other occurs not only at the level of conscious cognitive assessments or verbal communication, but also at a deeper – physiological and nonverbal – level, which can be conditionally described as the level of “energy” of interaction. In this context, Schreiber A., Wright A., Beeney J., Stepp S., Scott L., Pilkonis P., Hallquist M. view romantic relationships as a dynamic system of coregulation, within which the emotional states, behaviors, and physiological processes of partners are mutually coordinated or, conversely, diverge. Physiological coregulation is defined as a two-way process in which the autonomic responses of one partner (in particular, heart rate, which reflects the activity of the autonomic nervous system) adapt to the state of the other, maintaining the relative stability of the couple system. Such coordination is an important mechanism of emotional support and “load sharing”, when stress regulation becomes less energy-intensive due to the presence of a close other [12]. Disruption of physiological coregulation, the so-called counter-coregulation, in which the physiological indicators of partners “move away” from each other, is associated with an immediate increase in negative affect, the perception of the partner as emotionally cold, and a decrease in subjective closeness. Moreover, such



microdynamic physiological processes have long-term consequences: increased disharmony after conflict statistically predicts a decrease in relationship satisfaction after 12 months. This suggests that nonverbal and physiological interaction is a kind of “deep channel” of influence that shapes the overall sense of security or danger in the relationship. In this sense, partnerships function as a living biopsychosocial system, where synchronization or disorder at the level of the autonomic nervous system reflects and at the same time shapes the emotional quality of the connection, the stability of the couple, and its long-term functionality [12].

Siegel D., Drulis C. [13] emphasize that awareness and knowledge play a key role in constructing how people experience “I” and “We”. In modern individualistic societies, the notion of a “solo-self” dominates, which reinforces the experience of separation, while interpersonal neurobiology offers an alternative vision – the intraconnected self, where the personal and the relational are integrated in the form of “Me + We = MWe”. In this context, relationships appear as a living process in which biological mechanisms (neuroplasticity, affect regulation, prefrontal cortex integration), cultural narratives (values of autonomy or interdependence) and interpersonal patterns (attachment, empathy, co-regulation) form a single system. Integration in the brain arises from integration between people, and therefore the quality of relationships directly affects mental health, a sense of belonging, and the ability of the system – a family or a couple – to adapt to stress and change [13].

Therefore, according to the author, the influence of culture and values, social and institutional factors on the family should be considered as a constantly changing process. The family simultaneously consumes imposed values and patterns, and at the same time becomes a builder of these patterns, which are transmitted further to society. Cultural gaps and the variability of different approaches to interaction within the family do not destroy the family institution, but rather indicate its adaptive potential in a multicultural American society.

Today, the USA has extensive state programs for family development, which are spread throughout the country. According to Kaminski J., Robinson L., Hutchins H., Newsome K., Barry C., programs for conflict prevention and development of family



relations in the USA are implemented in three key areas. Two main areas of psychological work with families are distinguished. The first area covers preventive programs aimed at broad groups of the population, which are implemented before the creation of a family or at the early stages of its formation. The second area is associated with corrective interventions aimed at families with already identified risks, where the main focus is on reducing emotional stress, developing emotional regulation skills and stabilizing family relationships.

According to a review by Kaminski J., Robinson L., Hutchins H., Newsome K., Barry C., a significant part of preventive programs aimed at developing strong family relationships, supporting psychosocial well-being, and preventing family conflict during the period of birth and early child development is implemented in the format of couple and family psychosocial interventions focused on supporting the mental health of infants and young children (IECMH). The foundation of IECMH is the quality of the interaction between the child and the caregiver, and therefore most effective programs are aimed not only at the child, but primarily at changing the knowledge, attitudes, emotions and behavioral patterns of parents and married couples [9].

In the USA, powerful, empirically based approaches to corrective couple therapy have been formed. Let's consider them [7, 10, 14].

Analysis of the study by Irvine T., Peluso P., Benson K., Cole C., Cole D., Gottman J., Schwartz Gottman J. shows that the Gottman Method Couples Therapy is a vivid example of a highly structured approach developed within one dominant psychological paradigm, which combines elements of behavioral, emotional and systemic perspectives, but at the same time remains conceptually coherent. The effectiveness of this approach in working with spouses experiencing infidelity is confirmed by comparison with treatment-as-usual: the use of the Trust Revival Method (Atone–Attune–Attach) led to a significant improvement in the quality of relationships, a decrease in hostile affective patterns, and an increase in positive emotional interaction. This indicates that within a single theoretical framework it is possible to create powerful, standardized, and reproducible clinical interventions [7].

Within the framework of family behavior modification, various tools are used to

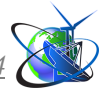


determine the current state of interaction within the family.

The cultural-systemic “scan” of the family can be considered an integrated tool of clinical and research assessment aimed at understanding the family not only as a collection of individuals, but also as a culturally embedded, socially connected, and dynamic system. The Cultural Formulation Interview (CFI), proposed by the American Psychiatric Association in DSM-5, plays a key role in this approach [14]. The CFI is structured to explore how the individual and members of their social network (primarily the family) make sense of the problem, its causes, meanings, sources of support, and expectations for help. In contrast to a purely symptom-oriented assessment, the CFI allows for a “scan” of cultural explanatory models, the role of identity, intergenerational and gender tensions, and the influence of social stressors and resources that shape the functioning of the family system. Thus, the clinical problem appears as a phenomenon embedded in a broader cultural and family context, rather than as an isolated intrapersonal disorder [14].

Complementing the cultural dimension of assessment are classical systemic tools, in particular the eco-map and the genogram, developed within the framework of the ecological and family-systems approach [6]. The eco-map provides a visual “scan” of the family’s living space, reflecting the nature of the connections between the family system and key social institutions (work, school, medicine, extended family, community), as well as the flows of resources, energy and stress. Its strength lies in its ability to simultaneously integrate factual information and the quality of relationships, making visible both areas of support and chronic conflicts or isolation. In combination with the CFI, the eco-map transforms the assessment into a joint process of exploring family reality, reduces client defensiveness and facilitates the transition from an individualizing focus to a transactional view of the problem as a result of the family’s interaction with its cultural and social environment [6,14]. Taken together, the Cultural & Family System Scan is not only a diagnostic tool, but also an intervention tool that lays the foundation for culturally sensitive, system-oriented family care.

Neuro-Behavioral Reframing is the process of purposefully changing emotional responses by influencing the cognitive appraisals that trigger and maintain affective



states. According to the cognitive emotion regulation model, emotions arise as a result of a multi-stage assessment of the significance of stimuli in relation to a person’s goals and needs, and therefore can be changed through interventions at the levels of interpretation, attention, and meaning [10].

The reformatting process is implemented primarily through cognitive reappraisal — the reinterpretation of the meaning of an event before or during the development of an emotional response. As a result, not only behavioral expression changes, but also subjective experience and physiological response, which makes neurobehavioral reformatting more adaptive compared to emotional suppression [10]

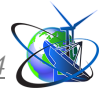
Table 2 - Neurobehavioral reformatting: levels, mechanisms, and effects

Level of analysis	Key processes	Neural mechanisms	Psychological effect
Cognitive	Reappraising the meaning of an event; changing stimulus interpretation; redirecting attention	Activation of dorsolateral and ventrolateral prefrontal cortex; involvement of cingulate cortex	Changing the meaning of the situation; reduced subjective threat
Affective	Modulating the intensity of emotional experience	Decreased activity in the amygdala and insula	Reduction of negative affect; increased emotional stability
Physiological	Regulating autonomic reactivity	Decreased sympathetic activation; more coordinated autonomic nervous system activity	Lower physiological tension
Behavioral	Developing more flexible responses instead of automatic ones	Mediated effect through cognitive control	Reduced impulsivity; more adaptive behavior
Systemic (integrative)	Aligning cognitive, emotional, and bodily processes	Functional interaction between prefrontal and limbic systems	More stable patterns of self-regulation and interpersonal interaction

Note: the table is based on the theoretical and empirical model of cognitive emotion regulation presented in the work of Ochsner & Gross [10].

Specialists working in government programs, as well as private family psychologists, use a complex of different practices that allow finding compromises in solving family problems.

Some of them are based on well-researched conscious practices and mindfulness approaches, the effectiveness of which has been confirmed by randomized studies in the field of emotion regulation and relationship quality [3]. Another part includes



somatic-oriented and energy approaches (energy work, biofield therapies, energy psychology), which are widely used in clinical and integrative practice, but are characterized by limited evidence and controversial mechanisms. At the same time, systematic reviews demonstrate the existence of preliminary clinical effects and at the same time highlight methodological difficulties, in particular the problems of standardization, dosage and measurement of the processes of interaction between the practitioner and the client [8]. In working with couples, these tools can be considered as complementary, provided that a clear distinction is made between the level of evidence and the conscious clinical application (Table 3).

Table 3 – Tools for working with deep emotional processes and the “inner energy” of the couple

Group of approaches	Tools / practices	Main focus of impact	Level of evidence
Mindful practices and mindfulness	Mindfulness-Based Relationship Enhancement (MBRE); shared meditation practices; mindful breathing in couples	Increasing emotional awareness, acceptance, co-regulation, and intimacy between partners	Well-researched; available RCTs and data on lasting effects
Somatically oriented approaches	Focus on bodily sensations; work with tension and arousal; physical co-regulation	Integrating emotional and physiological responses; reducing autonomic arousal	Moderate evidence base; growing empirical interest
Energy psychology / biofield therapies	Reiki, Therapeutic Touch, Healing Touch, external qigong	Subjectively experienced “energy”, relaxation, reduction of distress	Limited evidence; heterogeneous results, methodological challenges
Integrative approaches	Combination of mindfulness, somatic, and energy-based practices in couple work	Aligning emotional, physical, and relational processes	Depends on components; requires cautious interpretation
Relational mindful practices	Shared rituals of presence, synchronization of attention and breathing	Deepening the sense of connection, safety, and shared relational space	Partially studied; based on data from mindfulness research

Note: The table is based on data on mindfulness-based relationship enhancement [3] and a review of clinical studies on biofield therapies [8]

The method is based on the integration of scientifically based psychological and neurobiological approaches with a systemic and cultural analysis of the family. The main components of the FEIR-Method are summarized and structured in Table 4.



Table 4 - Main components of the FEIR-Method

№	Component of the methodology	Content and functional purpose
1	Emotional Pattern Mapping	Identification of individual and dyadic emotional responses, affective triggers, attachment-related scenarios, and stable interaction patterns that structure everyday relational functioning [10].
2	Resonance & Consciousness Assessment	Assessment of mutual partner influence through nonverbal communication, physiological co-regulation, emotional attunement, and the subjective experience of bonding and relational presence [12].
3	Cultural & Family System Scan	Analysis of cultural context, family-of-origin scenarios, intergenerational transmission patterns, and value systems shaping partnership styles and expectations [1].
4	Neuro-Behavioral Reframing	Modification of automatic reactions, stress responses, and defensive behaviors based on neurobiological mechanisms of emotion regulation and cognitive control [10].
5	Harmonized Evolution Plan	Development of a long-term couple growth strategy integrating emotional regulation, behavioral change, shared values, and reflective awareness within a biopsychosocial framework [13].

Thanks to a holistic and step-by-step approach, this therapy helps to better understand the causes of family difficulties and find ways to solve them, taking into account the characteristics of each couple.

The method involves working with both the couple and individual family members. This makes it possible to work not only with the consequences of problems in the family, but also with their deeper causes. Such work helps to reduce the risk of divorce, strengthen relationships between partners, and increase the feeling of happiness and satisfaction with family life.

Due to this, the method is useful for practical work, training, and scientific research in the field of family psychology in the United States.

Conclusions

The family institution in the presented material appears as a holistic biopsychosocial system, the stability and adaptability of which are determined by the interaction of several key groups of factors. Cultural and value factors set the normative framework for family functioning, forming ideas about roles, autonomy, interdependence and family responsibilities. Social and interpersonal (marital) factors implement these orientations through everyday parenting practices, interaction styles,



support, or conflict. Emotional regulatory and biopsychological factors, in particular, physiological co-regulation of partners, provide emotional closeness and resistance to stress. Systemic and identification-meaning-making factors integrate these levels, forming the experience of “We”, psychological safety, and long-term functionality of the family as a single system.

Family support programs in the United States are created taking into account possible difficulties and the level of risk for the family. Preventive programs are aimed at building a system of better understanding of each other, using appropriate emotions. Correctional programs help reduce emotional tension in the family, establish interaction between family members and support the mental health of children. Working with a couple affects the feelings of partners, improves their relationship and helps change behavior within the family.

The innovative practices presented in the material are based on the integration of cultural-system analysis, neurobiological mechanisms of emotion regulation and interpersonal co-regulation. The key foundations of such approaches are Cultural & Family System Scan (CFI, eco-map, genogram), neuro-behavioral reformatting and multi-level assessment of emotional and physiological patterns of interaction. Integrative methods, in particular the FEIR-Method, conceptualize the family as a living system in which cognitive, emotional, bodily and value processes are coordinated into a long-term development strategy. This approach allows for a targeted influence on the deep factors of family stability, and not only on the behavioral manifestations of conflict.

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