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## Family and Sibling Relations Concepts of Preschoolers

Olga S. Alekseeva<sup>a\*</sup>, Irina E. Rzhanova<sup>a</sup>, Anna Ya. Fominykh<sup>a</sup>, Nadezda M.  
Zyryanova<sup>b</sup>

<sup>a</sup>*Psychological Institute of Russian Academy of Education, Mokhovaya st. 9-4, Moscow, 125009, Russia*

<sup>b</sup>*Lomonosov Moscow State University, Mokhovaya st. 11/9, Moscow, 125009, Russia*

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### Abstract

The study is a part of the “Children in the Changing World” project. The article contains the analysis of children’s concepts of their present and future families, ascertained through interviews conducted with preschool children. The qualitative analysis of the data suggests that the image of the ideal family for modern preschoolers is a family with two children. The structure of the parents’ family influences the concept of the child’s future family. Willingness to have more than one child in future depends on the current conflict in a sibling pair.

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\* Alekseeva O.S. Tel.: +7-910-438-55-70; fax: +0-000-000-0000 .

E-mail address: [olga\\_\\_alexeeva@mail.ru](mailto:olga__alexeeva@mail.ru)

## 1. Introduction

Scientific research of role-playing game convincingly shows that children learn family roles and respective behavioral rules fairly early [1], [2]. Children have their ideas of the “proper” family structure, who shall be the “principal” in the family, how many children there should be and how they should be brought up, may you punish them, how often to give presents, etc. Concepts of sibling relations are the model and orientation point for the building of the future relations with friends, spouses and colleagues at the working place. Conflicts and hostile sibling relations can lead to breaking of social ties in adult life [3], [4], [5].

The aim of this work was to investigate family and sibling relations concepts of preschoolers.

The study is a part of the “Children in the Changing World” project, aimed to detect the social changes influences on the preschoolers’ world image [6], [7], [8], [9]. A part of the data obtained in the course of the 2009 assessment and preliminary research of 2015 were included in the article.

## 2. Method

In 2009 sample group consisted of 146 children: 68 girls and 78 boys aged from 4 and a half to 7 (the average age was 5 years and 8 months). In 2015 sample group consisted of 56 children aged 6–7. There were 25 girls and 31 boys among them.

The main method used was the structured interview, which included the following questions: With whom do you live? Have you got any brothers or sisters? Would you like to have a brother or a sister? Would you like to be the eldest or the youngest? When you grow up, will you marry? Why do people marry? How many children would you like to have? Why?

## 3. Results

In 2009, more than half of children (55%) were the only children in the family. 38% were growing up in families with two children, and only about 7% of the children had two or more siblings.

In the sample of 2015 about 44% of the interviewed children are the only children, 33% live with one sibling, and 23% have two or more brothers and sisters. That is, if you compare the data for 2009 and 2015, you can see that the number of children living in families with several children is higher.

### 3.1. Influence of the number of children in a family on the wish to have more siblings

In 2009, most answers to the question “Would like to have a brother or a sister” were affirmative. Some children wanted to have two or more brothers and sisters: “I have neither brother, nor sister. I would like an elder boy and girl”, “I haven’t. Mom intends to have a child. Dad and I have been asking her for that”.

The pattern is similar in 2015 – most of children would like to have brothers and sisters (82% of the interviewed). The motives of that children’s wish are various: “I would like a brother. A younger one. I would like to have someone younger than me at home”.

According to the 2009 data, children who would not like to have a sibling were children from the family with one child. They justify their unwillingness by difficulties, which arise when a baby appears: “I would not like anyone. There are too many worries”, “Mom suggests it because we have an old bed that is my old bed, and it will be a pity to throw it away. And where can we put it? All space is occupied there at home”.

In 2015, children who would not like to have either brothers or sisters, and there were 12% of them, already had elder or younger siblings.

On the contrary, the only children dreamed about siblings, sometimes they called their friends brothers and sisters: “And I have four brothers, only they are adopted brothers. Adopted means “my friends”.

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