

UNDERSTANDING MARRIAGE AND FAMILY POLICY IN THE SOVIET UNION

BY

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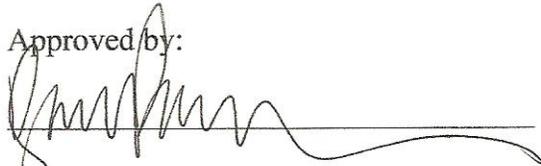
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Abstract

For my honor's thesis I decided to write a research paper on marriage and family policy in the Soviet Union. This thesis seeks to understand how each Soviet leader used marriage and family policy to shape society and how the policies the leaders created affected society and how society in turn affected future policy creation. The paper is divided into five major research sections; each leader is discussed in his own section. I chose this topic because it tied together all of my three majors- Gender and Women's Studies, Russian Studies, and Political Science. At the end of the paper I will discuss how this topic can be understood through the lenses of Political Science and Gender and Women's Studies.

Introduction

The socialist revolution of October 1917 and the creation of the USSR in 1922 caused changes that affected the lives of all the citizens of the newly formed Soviet Union. One of the areas of life that the Soviet Union aimed to radically change was the institution of marriage and the organization of family life. Family life was one of the major ways the government sought to control the personal lives of citizens. The government aimed to control marriage and family life through both official Soviet government policy and other government propaganda. In this paper I examine the ways in which the USSR attempted to manage marriage and family life and how this changed throughout the era of the Soviet Union.

I discuss five time periods that reflect changes in leadership in Soviet society. These periods mark significant shifts in how the Soviet government managed marriage and family life. This is because each Soviet leader brought with him new understandings of how marriage and family life could be used as a tool within Soviet society. The first time period examined is from 1917 to 1928 which marks the formation of the Soviet Union under the leadership of Vladimir Ilyich Lenin. The second time period encompasses Stalinism from 1929 to 1953. The third period focuses on the years between 1953 and 1964, when Nikita Khrushchev was in power and pursued policies of de-Stalinization. The fourth period focuses on the years of 1964 to 1984, when the Soviet Union was under the leadership of Leonid Brezhnev. The fifth and final time period is from 1984 to the end of the Soviet Union in 1991, when the country was led by Mikhail Gorbachev. I pay most attention to the first time period from 1917 to 1928, because the greatest changes in life for people living in the Soviet Union took place during these years. This period is also important because subsequent time periods defined their marriage and family policies in

relation to this one. I present a comparative study of how different time periods of the USSR changed how marriage and family life were managed.

This paper will answer several research questions and attempt to prove several important points. Firstly, I hope this paper will demonstrate why marriage and family policies are important to study for scholars of the fields of both Political Science and Gender and Women's Studies. Secondly, this paper will seek to answer the question of how the power dynamics of the Soviet Union affected policy. The way power was managed in the Soviet Union greatly affected the treatment of marriage and family life. It is important to note that even though in many ways the Soviet government managed the lives of its citizens through top-down coercive power, the citizens of the USSR also pushed back against the Soviet policies and helped to shape the ways that marriage and family life were constructed in the Soviet Union. The reactions of Soviet citizens to the policies their government imposed helped to shape the creation of new policies.

Studying marriage and family life illuminates some of the issues that women faced in the USSR. In the Soviet Union, women were encouraged to participate in both domestic and public life. The brunt of marriage and family work often fell to women. Marriage was frequently used as a way to control the private lives of Soviet people, but especially, it was a way to control women's lives. Before the Soviet revolution, there was great inequality in Russia. The village system was governed by patriarchal hierarchies with women at the bottom. Urban upper class women were also subordinate to their male counterparts. The education of women was not seen as a priority, this greatly limited the opportunities for women. The Soviet Revolution aimed to change all of this. It hoped to create gender equality, partially through changing the institution of marriage.

This paper will primarily focus on how the policies of the Soviet government affected marriage and family life in urban Russian centers. The policies affected life throughout the Soviet Union differently. In the urban centers of Russia it was easier for the government to control how the policies were implemented and to ensure that they were being followed. The Soviet government did have control over the rural areas, however, they were not all as tightly controlled as the urban centers. An interesting study could be done examining more deeply how the Soviet marriage policies affected life in rural areas; however, there is not time to do so in this paper.

The changes in Soviet marriage policy throughout the years reflect the different understandings that Soviet leaders had towards the use of marriage. Leaders varied in how they approached government policies that could shape marriage and family structures. I will seek to explain the different ways that each leader changed marriage policy and show the effects these changing policies had on life for Soviet women. This paper also will discuss how women reacted to and against these policies and pushed back against the government. It will pay specific attention to the governmental policies that the leaders of the Soviet Union put in place to manage marriage and family life. There are several reasons why examining these policies are useful. Firstly, the policy changes illustrate what the government aimed to accomplish through the regulation of marriage and family life. Secondly, looking at policies is important because these policies directly affected women's lives, especially the lives of urban women living in Russian cities, for better or for worse. At times it was the very non presence of policies for women that caused strife in women's lives, such as the lack of Soviet policy giving single mothers proper governmental support. Thirdly, examining these policies reveal the intricate relationship between

government and the people. It shows how the interaction of people and the government create the society, institutions, and structures that govern life.

Leninism and the Transformation of Marriage 1917-1928

In this section I will examine the transformation of marriage in the Russian Soviet Federal Socialist Republic, which will become the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics, from 1917 to 1928. This time period was marked by radical changes to marriage policies. The laws instated in this time period gave people greater freedom regarding marriage and divorce.

The new Russian Soviet Federal Socialist Republic under the leadership of Vladimir Ilyich Lenin undertook the daunting task of reforming Russian society. One of the key sites of reforms was marriage. The reformation of marriage affected all aspects of life for Soviet citizens. Women were especially affected because the reforms gave them rights they had previously never had access to. Marriage was an important area of reform to the RSFSR leaders for several reasons. Firstly, marriage was seen as an oppressive institution leftover from the society before the revolution. It was thought that for the revolution to be truly successful and create equality of people, the institution of marriage needed to be radically reformed and eventually disbanded. Secondly, women were a very visible category of oppression. Many leaders at this time believed that women could be mobilized as the catalyst to liberate everyone else in society (Koenker 1995, 1439). Marriage was thought to be one of the main institutions preventing the liberation of women. It is important to note that while special attention was paid to marriage during this time period, the new Soviet government did not intend to specifically focus on women's issues. Many governmental leaders thought that women's liberation would come with the liberation of the masses; therefore, women's issues did not need special attention (Juviler 2001, 133).

At the start of the RSFSR and then the Soviet Union there was the optimistic belief that the changes made to society after the revolution would cause all of the bourgeoisie institutions, including marriage and the traditional understanding of the family, to wither away. Before the Soviet revolution, the family had been the unit of society that raised children and was the center of production and consumption (Goldman 1993, 7). The new post-revolution government aimed to create institutional changes that would transform social life. There was the expectation that with these institutional changes the concept of marriage and traditional family life would become completely outdated and old fashioned (Goldman, 1993, 5). It was understood that with the changes the revolution brought about gender equality would evolve and marriage would no longer exist.

The first institutional policy change that the new Soviet government created was the 1918 Family Code on Marriage, the Family, and Guardianship. It was ratified by the Russian Central Executive Committee of Soviets. The marriage code of 1918 was designed to fundamentally change the institution of marriage and give more rights to women and children. This marriage code was to be the first of many policies that would revolutionize marriage and family life. It was the hope that through the implementation of these policy changes, marriage would fall by the wayside as Soviet society progressed. With the new Soviet institutions, it was thought that men and women would be able to independently support themselves. Children would be raised in institutions so that both parents would be free to work and other institutions, such as the union, would replace the family unit as society's main kinship structure. (Goldman, 1993, 5). With these changes it was thought society would no longer need marriage as its core foundation.

The 1918 code decreed that women were equal under the law. This caused a great change in the status of both upper and lower classes of women. Women now had greater ability

to exercise agency over their own lives, such as matters regarding finances and education. Previously, any wealth a woman had before she married or gained during marriage automatically became the property of her husband. After the 1918 marriage code, women could now keep and manage any money they made during the marriage. Women were also to become equal workers in Soviet society, there was an assumption that women would now become part of the working class and each spouse would be able to support themselves without the help of the other (Goldman 1993, 5).

The 1918 Marriage Code aimed to change the foundations of marriage. The code decreed that marriage was no longer considered a religious institution; it was an institution of the state. Divorce became much easier for both women and men because it was no longer necessary to give any reason for divorce. This was a large change in Russian society; previously, procuring a divorce was difficult and only allowable under certain situations, such as adultery (Goldman, 1993, 3). Another change was the relationship between love and marriage. There was a belief that marriage pre-revolution was rarely based on romantic love and instead simply a way to organize society at the expense of the proletariat. Before the Revolution women were required to marry for economic security. The new Soviet government aimed to change people's reasons for marrying. The official state position encouraged people to marry only if they were in love. It was believed that the changes made to Soviet society to increase the rights of women made it unnecessary for people to marry for any other reason (Shlapentokh, 1984, 21).

New policies regarding family life and the marriage code in this period created a number of important transformations. Firstly, policies on a woman changing her name in marriage were reformed. Previously, women were forced to take their husband's name after they married. Under the new system, women were free to retain their name or assume their husband's name.

Despite the freedom to retain their last names the vast majority of women continued to take their husband's names (Fisher 1980, 13). Secondly, this marriage code affected issues regarding children. The code altered how illegitimate children were treated under the law. All children, whether born within or out of wedlock, were required to have parental support. In order to do this, fathers became responsible for their children, even if they were not married to the mother. If a woman was unable to identify the father, the idea of collective fathers was implemented. This meant that if a woman got pregnant and was unable to name a father, all the men a woman had sex with in that time span had parental duties to that child (Goldman 1993, 7). Before this law was put into practice children born out of wedlock had no legal rights (Goldman, 1993, 6). Thirdly, this marriage code attempted to limit the exploitation of child workers. Before the marriage code many orphan children were adopted by farmers and other agricultural workers as a source of free labor. After the implementation of the 1918 code, orphaned children became wards of the state as a way to protect them from exploitation (Goldman, 1993, 8). A fourth institutional change that greatly affected marriage and family life was the reorganization of domestic life. Individual women were no longer to be solely responsible for housework and raising children. Instead, these aspects of life would be institutionalized. Child rearing would be done by day care centers and private family dining would be replaced by public cafeterias (Shlapentokh 1984, 21). Domestic housework was also to become institutionalized, with tasks such as washing and sewing performed by public agencies (Goldman, 1993, 6).

While the institutional changes of the 1918 Marriage Code did affect Soviet life during this time period, it is important to note that there was dissension about these changes both within the government and in society. The 1918 Marriage Code reflected how Vladimir Lenin felt marriage and family life should be organized. Many people disagreed with his ideas. During this

time period the Soviet government did not yet have absolute control over society, so these dissenting opinions could be expressed. Many Marxist women's rights activists felt that the new Marriage Code did not go far enough to reorganize social life. They called for the immediate dissolution of marriage. These women's rights activists believed that true gender equality could never be reached if marriage still existed (Shlapentokh 1984, 21). They also believed the changes made to housework and child rearing were not enough and women would still be forced to fulfill their traditional roles (Shlapentokh 1984, 21). Other dissenters believed that sexuality was still too regulated with the new Marriage Code. They argued that sexual acts and relationships should not be given any special consideration. Sex should be given the same consideration as any other act performed every day. Raising children was another contentious issue of the time. Some people believed that parents should have some degree of control over their children while others believed that parents should have no power over their children and that parents, especially mothers, only did their children more harm than good (Goldman 1993, 9). It was thought that to create the new generation of Soviet citizens children would need to be removed from their ignorant, but loving parents (Goldman 1993, 9). Another view was that children should be raised in nurseries, but parents would have the ability to see their children whenever they wished (Goldman 1993, 10).

Another policy change that greatly affected marriage and family life was the 1920 lift on the ban on abortions. Previously, abortions were strictly outlawed in Russia. For example, according to the 1885 criminal code abortions were considered premeditated murder (Goldman 1993, 255). Despite the ban on abortions, many women sought abortions as a way to control fertility, often resorting to dangerous methods to end their pregnancies. Realizing that something needed to be done, the Commissariats of Health and Justice lifted the ban on abortions. This new

decree not only lifted the ban on abortions but made abortions free to women (Goldman 1993, 256). There was some controversy over the legalizing of abortions. It was thought that the desire women had to control their fertility was not a right, but rather an example of a failure of the Soviet Union. There was the belief that if the government provided economic and institutional support for women, they would not seek to have abortions. It is important to note that other forms of contraception were not discussed at this time. It was hoped that in the future women would no longer seek to control their fertility, through abortion or any other means (Goldman 1993, 256). It was thought that once economic conditions in the Soviet Union improved and institutions existed to raise children, women would have no problem having many children. This policy is an example of the effect of not hearing women's voices on issues that affected them. Had women been more involved in policy creation the government would have realized that no matter what institutional changes are made women will always want to limit their fertility in some way. The lack of attention paid to birth control methods and sexual education had a great effect on marriage and family life. Since other birth control methods were not available at this time abortion became the main method of birth control. Abortions, even though they could now be done in medical facilities, were not ideal for women. Women were forced to wait in the doctor's office for hours and had little to no privacy during abortion procedures. Doctors would operate on two to six women simultaneously and generally no anesthetic was used (Maltseva 1984, 111).

The 1926 Laws on Marriage, the Family, and Guardianship were in the same spirit of the 1918 Marriage Code. This new code took the idea of simplifying divorce even farther than the 1918 Code. The requirements for marriage became even more lenient (Shlapentokh 1984, 23). This code also addressed several social issues that had developed as a result of the 1918 code.

The new 1926 code addressed issues regarding cohabitating without marriage, the problems the freedom to divorce was creating, and the growing number of orphans.

The Marriage Codes of 1918 and 1926 were not the only changes that affected marriage and family life. The revolution prompted the formation of many different institutions that aimed to change Soviet life. One of the major organizations for young people was the Komsomol. This institution developed during the Civil War period. It was originally meant to organize the youth into rebel groups to help fight in the Civil War (Gorsuch 1996, 637). After the Revolution the Komsomol changed to reflect the new norms of what young men should be. The Komsomol member of the 1920s was supposed to be politically literate, active, and disciplined. This change brought about the fear that the image of the Komsomol was losing its masculinity (Gorsuch 1996, 638). Young women were expected to be active in the Komsomol; however, the issues of young women were very rarely addressed in Komsomol meetings. Young men in the Komsomol often complained that the young women members were culturally backward. They blamed the young women for their own backwardness. It was thought that young women were “tainted” by the private sphere. Until they freed themselves from the private sphere, they could not be true members of the Komsomol or the Communist Party. The Komsomol did little to help the young female members. Men who were active in the Komsomol were told to encourage their wives to stay home and not join the Komsomol so that they could take care of the home for their husbands (Gorsuch 1996, 655).

The laws rearranging marriage and family life during this time had different effects on rural people and urbanites. During this time period the majority of citizens in the Soviet Union lived in the country side. Even with the revolution their lives had not changed significantly in hundreds of years. The restructuring of life that the new marriage laws tried to bring about were

in direct conflict with how agricultural life had been structured for hundreds of years (Goldman 1993, 145). Two main institutions governed life for village peasants- the *dvor* (the household) and the *mir* (the commune). The *dvor* was patriarchal. A household was made up of many families and the household worked as one unit. Money was not divided into individual shares. A man was always the head of the household. He did not own the land or money of the household, but he was responsible for managing it (Goldman 1993, 148). A woman's position in a household could be tenuous, mainly supported by her husband and male children. Before the revolution, a woman could be thrown out if her husband died and she did not have any children. The Soviet policy that affected peasant women the most was the 1922 Land Code. This code gave peasant women the right to vote in commune affairs (Goldman 1993, 152). It also gave women more rights in their husband's household. They had a right to receive profits from the commune. If the property was ever divided, women now had the ability to receive a share (Goldman 1993, 154).

The changes the revolution brought created difficulties for urban women. Urban women faced the difficulty of finding jobs in cities. As the saying goes, women were traditionally the last hired and first fired. When women were able to find jobs they were criticized. It was thought that the work they did was inferior and it was believed they did not fulfill their Party expectations. Because women were the caregivers of children and responsible for maintaining the family life, they did not have as much time to devote to the Party (Koenker 1995, 1441). The lack of participation in the Communist Party was used as proof of women's own backwardness. Women became the problem, not the demands the Soviet Revolution forced on them (Gorsuch 1996, 643). When women were able to find jobs they were often sexually harassed or discriminated against (Koenker 1995, 1443). Women were also paid less than their male

counterparts. All of this made it extremely difficult for women to be economically independent and fulfill the Soviet ideal of being equal economic partners in marriage.

The time period from 1917 to 1928 arguably involved the most dramatic changes to Soviet marriage and family life. The 1918 and 1926 Marriage Codes revolutionized how the government viewed and treated marriage and family life. Women were granted unprecedented freedoms in terms of divorce and property. It is important to note that the institutional changes these two codes created did not affect all women equally. Urban women were affected more by these changing laws. This is not to say that peasant women were not affected, however the patriarchic society associated with the agricultural sector of society was not as easily changed. This is especially true because it was harder for the Soviet government to directly influence the lives of villagers at this time.

The Marriage Codes of 1918 and 1926 were part of a larger policy goal of eradicating gender inequality in the Soviet Union. It was believed that gender inequality was a result of class exploitation and that the issue of gender equality would be determined when class equality was resolved. The Marriage codes of this time were not considered the end goals of Soviet policy on marriage; they were merely seen as a step in the larger goal of obliterating gender inequality. Even the author of the 1918 Marriage Code hoped for it to be rendered obsolete by Soviet society (Goldman 1993, 4). The goal was to change society enough that marriage would become obsolete. After the institution of marriage no longer existed, people would be free to engage in any sexual or social relationships they wished. Children would no longer be raised in the family circle, but rather, in institutions. Marriage and family life was to be the vehicle by which social change was made for women. It was thought that if marriage and family life was revolutionized the status of women would be elevated to be equal with men.

The Marriage Codes of 1918 and 1926 did not meet the goals of creating gender equality in the Soviet Union; however, in some ways they did succeed in giving women more rights. The Soviet Union did not make enough institutional changes to allow for true gender equality to come about. Giving women the ability to divorce and providing them daycare was not enough to elevate their positions. One of the main problems that women in the Soviet Union faced was in regard to their economic condition. As discussed earlier, the 1918 marriage code presumed equality of partners in economic matters. This was simply not the case. Both urban and rural women still struggled to be economically independent.

While the initial reforms of the Soviet Union did cause many changes to marriage and family life in the Soviet Union, these reforms were ultimately not enough and had fundamental flaws. For example, one of the ways that women were to be liberated was through the use of institutions to raise children and do housework. These institutions did free up some women from the burdens of housework and childrearing, however, at the same time they displaced the burden onto other women. The domestic work institutions were primarily staffed by women. The women who worked in the children's day care center were middle aged or elderly women. Most often these women did not have children of their (Maltseva 1984, 111). In these children's institutions there were only about two adults per twenty five to thirty children. The workers of these institutions were overworked and often care of the children was overlooked. The female workers knew that the children were too young to speak of any mistreatment that occurred while they were in these institutions (Maltseva 1984, 111).

The reforms and institutional changes that the government attempted to make at this time were not enough to cause the hoped for transformation of the status of women. In this section of the paper, I discussed the institutional changes that the government made to reform marriage and

family life. These institutional changes included giving women equal rights under law, reforming divorce procedures, and giving women access to abortions. Despite these institutional changes, the government was not able to completely reform marriage and family life to create gender equality. There were many reasons for this. One of the biggest problems was the lack of women's input into these institutional changes. The Soviet government during this time, and indeed through most of the Soviet Union, attempted to implement top down reforms without the input of women. The reforms did attempt to address some of the very real problems in women's lives, such as inequality within marriage and women's role within the private sphere but they were ultimately unsuccessful because they did not fix the underlying problems of the system. The following sections of the paper will discuss further institutional changes the government made and how successful/unsuccessful these changes were at reforming marriage and family life.

Soviet Marriage Policy under Stalin 1929 to 1953

The time period from 1929 to 1953 saw substantial changes in Soviet policy regarding marriage and family life. After Vladimir Lenin died in 1924, Joseph Stalin consolidated power and became the new leader of the USSR. Stalin brought with him specific goals he wanted to achieve. Marriage and family life was a mechanism to achieve some of these goals. The policy changes of the previous regime affected Soviet life in some expected and unexpected ways. Stalin's rule allowed very little debate over his views of marriage and family life. Unlike under Lenin, dissenting opinions about how marriage should be regulated were not prevalent within the government or in public life.

During this time period the dialogue concerning the "woman question" changed. The official party line was that the "woman question" had been solved through the reforms of Lenin. It was thought that there was no need to specifically address women's issues because Soviet

society had already achieved gender equality. This was not the case since women were still far from equal in Soviet society. The official party line that the “women question” had been solved will persist until the 1960s (Holland 1985, 25). However, at the same time the party was claiming the woman question had been solved, new problems surrounding women, marriage, and family life were emerging. New problems, such as the declining birth rates, created new dialogue in the Soviet Union. Propaganda began surfacing in the Soviet Union attempting to convince women to both work and have children (Evans 1981, 763). Believing that the “woman question” had been solved was used as a justification for rolling back some of the previous reforms to marriage and family life. It was argued that some rights given to women, such as the right to an abortion, had only ever been temporary measures and now that the Soviet Union had achieved equality they were no longer needed. Even though the party argued the “woman question” had been solved, the policies of this time regarding marriage and family life show that it had been anything but resolved.

One of the major aims of Stalin was to stabilize marriage. The rising divorce and abortion rates from Lenin’s family policies had in some ways weakened the family as an institution. Indeed, this was what many of the marriage policies under Lenin aimed to do. Stalin wanted to undo this weakening of the family because he believed that a strong family was essential to a successful regime. It is important to note that while Stalin did want a strong family, he wanted people’s loyalty to be first and foremost to the state, not their families (Shlapentokh 1984, 25). Stalin wanted to use the strength of the family in two ways. Firstly, he believed that strong family ties would help to prevent opposition groups from gaining support. Secondly, he wanted to use the family as a way to police the private sphere. Families were expected to turn in any family members engaging in anti government activity (Shlapentokh 1984, 27). Because of this

belief that the traditional nuclear family was important to the Soviet system, Stalin undertook reforms to previous policies in an attempt to re-strengthen the family.

Joseph Stalin was able to achieve almost total control over Soviet society; however, he was still constrained in his policy making regarding marriage. There were certain ideological expectations that were difficult for Stalin to completely ignore. Vladimir Lenin left behind a legacy of Soviet ideology that was not quickly forgotten by the Soviet people. One of these expectations was the idea that marriage should be an institution that people enter into because of love. Under Lenin, marriage was a union that should be formed and broken when people move in and out of love. The idea that marriage was based upon love and could be ended whenever that love was not as passionate was not an ideal foundation for Stalin's concept of a stable marriage system. However, Stalin could not simply do away with the notion of love and marriage because he depended on the ideological foundation Lenin created. Stalin dealt with this issue by redefining marital love. Instead of basing marriage upon temporary passionate-love, he switched the definition of love to long lasting love that would exist for a lifetime (Shlapentokh 1984, 27). This idea of long lasting love was then used to justify pressuring citizens into staying in their marriages.

Two important reforms of Lenin were changed in this time period- abortion and divorce. The reforms that occurred under Lenin allowed women easier access to abortions and divorce. Many women sought abortions as a way to control their fertility. As a result, the birth rate of the Soviet Union declined. The declining birth rate was seen as extremely problematic for economic and social reasons. To try and combat the falling birthrate in 1935 the government banned all abortions of the first child of a couple (Juviler 2001, 132). In 1936 it went even further and banned all non therapeutic abortions. The ban on abortions was extremely problematic for

women during the Soviet Union because it was often the only form of birth control available. There were condoms available in the Soviet Union at this time period, however, the quality was extremely low. Condoms earned the nick name “galoshes” because of their poor fit and easy breakability (Rankin-Williams 2001, 700). Women were more likely to rely on homemade methods of birth control, such as the withdrawal method or a vaginal douche made of lemon juice (Rankin- Williams 2001, 700). These methods can (and did) fail. Women were left with abortion as their only option for birth control. Not only did the Soviet government limit women’s options to control their fertility, but it also increased pressure on women to have more children. The government increased the amount of money it gave families for having children. However, the increase in money was still insufficient to cover the costs of having a child. There were also reforms relating to divorce. As part of making the family a more stable unit of society, Stalin implemented reforms that made divorce more difficult. In 1936 both parties had to be present for a divorce. In 1944 divorce became very expensive and the divorce proceedings had to be held in two courts (Juviler 2001, 132). Because of these new added difficulties, procuring a divorce became too difficult for many people and they were forced to remain in their marriages.

The idea of the family wage became an institutional norm during this time period. It was never codified into law; however, the Congress of Labor Commissars did endorse the idea. The family wage was the idea that a family unit should only make so much money as a group. If the income of the family became more than this minimum amount, then one of the family members (almost always the woman) should be fired (Koenker 1995, 1442). The implementation of the family wage had many ramifications for women. Because women were almost always the first ones fired if the family made over the minimum, it was difficult for women to be equal partners in the relationship (as Soviet marriage policy under Lenin stressed). Many women were forced to

rely on their husbands economically. This made it more difficult for women to seek divorce. During Lenin's time it was thought that both partners in a marriage should be wage earners and be able to support themselves. The implementation of the family wage policy made equal financial partnership almost impossible.

The institutions that were created under Lenin to help with childcare and housework still existed during this time period; however, they did not function well. Women were still the only gender expected to take care of housework. If any man did help with domestic work, he was often made fun of by his coworkers. Women were responsible for taking care of the domestic sphere both in city and in rural life. However, in rural life, household work was a little bit more equal because men also had domestic work they were responsible for, such as cutting and bringing in firewood (Bucher 2000, 150). The institutions to take care of housework and childcare were inadequate and could not fully liberate women from their domestic constraints. There were some developments that helped women, such as the communal household washing machine developed in 1949 (Bucher 2000, 149). These institutions were still lacking in the funding, quality, and quantity to truly liberate women from their domestic concerns. The conditions that people lived in also made it difficult for women to take care of domestic responsibilities. Crowded communal apartments made it difficult to cook or clean. Women during this time period still found themselves burdened with the sole responsibility of taking care of the house.

A decrease in men affected marriage and family life in this period of the Soviet Union. Under Stalin, two events happened that caused the shortfall of men- World War II and Stalin's purges. Both of these events caused widespread loss of life (especially of men). The loss of men changed how marriage was viewed in the Soviet Union and in turn changed official Soviet

marriage policy. Because there were fewer men than women of marriageable age it became a status symbol for women to be married. Even if a man was considered to be no good, it was better to stay with him than leave. This led to many women staying with abusive husbands (Alexandrova 1984, 31). The lack of men also increased the amount of unwed mothers and illegitimate children. Because of the war, there were many quick marriages on the front lines. Some of the men had already been married to other women and had never filed for divorce (Bucher 2000, 145). There were many single mothers during this time period. Single mothers did receive financial assistance from the government; however, it was still very difficult for women to raise a child on their own. Because single women were not uncommon in the Soviet Union, there was not a lot of stigma associated with being an unwed mother (Bucher 2000, 146). The state had a complicated relationship with unwed mothers at this time. On the one hand, Stalinism encouraged the family as the only stable unit for society. However, on the other hand the birth rate needed to be increased. Since there were not enough men for every woman to have a husband, single mothers were essential. Women were told that having and raising children was their “sacred duty” to the state (Bucher 2000, 147).

In addition to decreasing the number of marriageable age men in Soviet society, World War Two had other important ramifications. More than twenty five million people died in WWII from the Soviet Union: eight million military forces and seventeen million civilians (Bucher 2000, 139). Because of the large scale loss of life that the Soviet Union experienced the government needed to mobilize society to recover and rebuild from the tragedy. One of the important tools that the government used to rebuild society was marriage and family life. Women were encouraged to be both wage earners and home makers. This was not a new demand the government had put on mothers, however, with the stress of WWII it became even more

difficult for women to meet these demands. But yet, the propaganda of this time made it seem as if the triple role of woman as housewife, worker, and party member was attainable with just a little hard work (Bucher 2000, 139). Due to the lack of men as a result of WWII and the purges, women were encouraged to take on jobs that were previously unavailable to them. Women became more prevalent in the heavy industries and in management positions. The reaction of women to the expectation that they should take these more masculine jobs was mixed. Women were more likely to be willing take masculine jobs when they were highly technical, but when the work was considered “dirty”, women were less likely to be willing to take these jobs. They still expected men to perform these tasks (Bucher 2000, 141).

There were two major governmental policies that reflected the institutional changes of the time. The Decree of 1936 and the Edict of 1944 were policies by Stalin’s government that aimed to reform marriage and family life. These policies came from changing ideas of how family policy could be used in the Soviet Union and shifting ideas of what women should need from the state.

The Decree of 1936 represented the first major policy change that affected marriage and family life under Joseph Stalin. This decree was also known as the “Decree in Defense of Mother and Child”. This decree banned women from getting abortions in the Soviet Union, unless it was necessary to save the mother’s life (Michaels 2001, 308). The government justified this by saying that the economic and social situation of Russia and other states of the Soviet Union had changed enough that abortions were no longer needed. Now, it was thought, women had the ability and funds to raise children (Michaels 2001, 309). This ban on abortions had many ramifications for women. Women lost the only reliable method they had to control their fertility.

The Edict of 1944 was decreed by the Presidium of the Supreme Soviet. This edict was partially created because of the fears of what the losses of World War II would do to family life. This new edict undid many of the changes of Lenin's marriage policies. The new laws created by this edict made divorce much more difficult to obtain. Marriage also became much more formal than it had been. For a marriage to be legal it now had to be legally registered with the state (Bucher 2000, 145). It also rolled back previous policy changes on illegitimate children. Previously, there had been no legal differentiation of legitimate and illegitimate children. With the Edict of 1944 only legitimate children with parents who had a legally registered marriage would be able to take on their father's name and, more importantly, receive paternal support (Bucher 2000, 145). This edict also attempted to encourage women to have more children. This edict decreed that mothers should have larger family allowances given to them by the government and longer maternity leave (Bucher 2000, 146).

This time period from 1929 to 1953 under Joseph Stalin reflected a large departure from the marriage and family policy under Vladimir Lenin. This departure was a result of differing opinions regarding the purpose of marriage and family life. Lenin wanted to use marriage and family life as a mechanism to further the Socialist revolution and restructure society as he envisioned it. Stalin also wanted to strengthen Soviet society, but had a very different viewpoint on how to accomplish this. In this section, I discussed the changes Stalin made to policies regarding marriage and family life. The two biggest changes discussed were the changes made to abortion and divorce. While it is doubtful that the reforms of Lenin would have actually created true gender equality, by rolling back the changes to marriage and family life in the Soviet Union the equality that could have been accomplished through the reforms of Lenin never had a chance to come to fruition.

Marriage Policy Reforms of Khrushchev 1953-1964

After Joseph Stalin's death in 1953 Nikita Khrushchev became the leader of the Soviet Union. Like his predecessors Khrushchev made changes in Soviet policy regarding marriage and family life. Also similarly to his predecessors, these Soviet family policies were used as domestic policy tools. The reforms Khrushchev made show how issues regarding family life had changed in the Soviet Union.

Nikita Khrushchev made substantial reforms to Soviet marriage policy. In 1954 there were repeals on laws that inflicted criminal punishments on women who had abortions. In 1955 the ban on abortions was completely lifted (Juviler 2001, 132). In the 1960s divorce was simplified (Alexandrova 1984, 31). The simplification of the divorce process greatly affected the divorce rate. From 1955 and 1965 the divorce rate rose by 270% (Field 1998, 599). These reforms were a part of a larger pattern of de-Stalinization by the Khrushchev regime. Like his predecessors, Khrushchev hoped to use marriage and family to accomplish domestic political goals. He believed that the only way he could achieve his political goals was through the diligent work of his citizens. For the citizens to be able to work for the good of the Soviet Union they needed to not be distracted by problems with family life. The policy changes were an attempt to stabilize domestic life so that citizens could focus on building communism (Field 1998, 600). The policy changes to marriage and family life were also part of a larger attempt to instill a new Communist morality (Field 1998, 602).

Under Joseph Stalin, the state had almost complete control over the media and flow of ideas in the Soviet Union. There was little official debate on issues, and any private debate was limited and kept underground. Khrushchev and de-Stalinization led to a limited opening up of Soviet society. There was more room for different interpretations of policy (though it is

important to note that by no means was Soviet society open to a free exchange of ideas). This slight opening up of ideas in society allowed for women to have more freedom to push back against the policies of the Soviet Union (Shlapentokh 1984, 33). The dominant discussion of marriage and family life was from propaganda and other official government publications, but with the changes the Khrushchev regime brought in, women were freer to push back against these policies.

The easing of the ban on abortions and the simplification of divorce did help some of the problems that women faced. Despite this, women still faced many of the same issues that they had in previous time periods. The institutions that were created to “liberate” them still functioned inefficiently and continued to displace the burden of the domestic work of one woman onto another. With these new freedoms of the Khrushchev era women openly criticized the institutions that were supposed to help be liberating them, such as the daycares and communal dining facilities.

During this time period the effects of WWII and Stalin’s purges were still felt, especially through the lack of men in society. Because of the family policies of Stalin, the importance of marriage increased. Marriage for women conferred upon them a sense of worth and well being. Even if a woman had a successful career, being married was what gave her the highest sense of self worth (Alexandrova 1984, 31). While this was not true for all women, it was the prevailing opinion within society.

Another policy change that Khrushchev made that affected marriage and family life was the end of the purges of society. The purges of Stalin strained family life. Friends, neighbors, even family members would turn each other into the secret police for anti-Soviet activities. The terror of the purges made it difficult for relationships to flourish. With the end of the purges

some of the strain was taken off of family life (Field 1998, 602). People had less fear that their personal relationships could cause them trouble.

The policy of love and marriage being tied together was changed during this time period. The policies under Khrushchev about love and marriage were more closely related to Stalin's philosophies than Lenin's. The desire for someone other than your spouse was to be suppressed (Field 1998, 604). Tied to this idea was Khrushchev's idea of a Communist morality. This new Communist morality required stable marriage. The community was to get involved if there was a problem within a marriage. This included organizations, such as the Komsomol. These organizations were supposed to aid people in finding solutions to their marital problems other than divorce (Field 1998, 604).

An issue that many women in the Soviet Union faced was the sexual exploitation. The government lacked policies that dealt with this issue. Many Soviet women found themselves not making enough money to support themselves through legal means. Some of these women either chose or were forced into prostitution. As Valentina Dobrokhotova eloquently summed up the experience of many Soviet women, a woman "runs away from domestic exploitation and ends up in industrial exploitation; she runs away from both the first and the second, and ends up being sexually exploited" (Dobrokhotova 1984, 7). This quote shows the lack of options that were available to women in the Soviet Union. The system was not working for them. The propaganda that told them they should be happily married wives, mothers, and workers did not reflect the actual experiences of women. While there were official Soviet policies attempting to regulate marriage and family life there were no laws or official edicts to deal with sexual exploitation. It was an issue that was not talked about, partially because it required the government to admit that there was not gender equality in the Soviet Union.

The Khrushchev era still had many of the same unresolved issues as previous eras. Problems such as insufficient childcare institutions continued to persist (Maltseva 1984, 111). While the government had made new laws under the Edict of 1944 to give mothers more government support for having more children, mothers often never saw the money. To receive government money mothers had to fill out significant amounts of paperwork and deal with bureaucratic rules and regulations (Metcalf 2005, 44). The continuation of these problems caused many women to continue being unhappy with how the government was regulating marriage and family life, unfortunately, there was little women could do to rectify their situation.

A policy of previous eras that was dealt with under Khrushchev was the idea of the one wage family. As discussed earlier, this was the concept that only one person had to work in a family to support the entire family. Usually, the member of the family who was the wage earner was the man. Women were more likely to be fired when the family's annual earnings became higher than the government thought the family should earn (Koenker 1995, 1442). During the Khrushchev era the idea of the one wage family became insufficient for family survival. Women needed to work to help support the family. This need was shown in Soviet propaganda. The return of the two wage family was not necessarily a return to Lenin's idea of equal partnership in marriage. It was because economic conditions demanded it, not because Soviet ideology of this time called for equal partnership.

The Khrushchev era marked changes in Soviet policy regarding marriage and family life. In keeping with other de-Stalinization policies, Khrushchev reformed many of the changes that Stalin had made to Soviet life. The two big policy changes were in relation to abortion and divorce. These changes, in some ways, did help women's lives. Gaining back access to abortions, the only method of birth control that Soviet women really had, helped women to

control their fertility. However, the propaganda of the time encouraged women to have many children and be good Soviet workers and mothers. Women now had access to abortions, but they were told that good citizens wouldn't have abortions. The simplification of divorce both helped and hurt women. It allowed women to leave their abusive husbands, but at the same time it also made it easier for husbands to abandon their wives. This could be especially difficult for women who did not have a job or had many children and could not support themselves.

This time period was marked with many instances of government failure to create policies that could support women. In fact, some government policies added to the problems women faced. The new Communist morality that the Khrushchev era created placed even more pressure on women to be good wives, mothers, and Communists. The government propaganda made it seem as if this triple burden could easily be borne with a little hard work. Many women were dissatisfied with this triple burden, but there was little they could do to relieve themselves of it. Though women now had more freedom to express their problems with the system, women still had to be careful to not express too much dissatisfaction with the status quo. Society was freer in the Khrushchev era; however, it was in no means free. The government also failed to fix problems that had existed in previous eras. The childcare and housework institutions that were supposed to be one of the main mechanisms freeing women from the demands of marriage and housework were still lacking in quality and quantity. Without these institutions becoming more efficient women were unable to be freed from these concerns. There was little done to improve these institutions. There was also little done to encourage women and men to share housework duties. The Khrushchev regime also failed to address issues regarding women's sexual exploitation. Ultimately, the Khrushchev regime continued to use marriage and family policy as

a mechanism to create other societal change. The changes Khrushchev made were not for the benefit of women, but rather for the benefit of the society he was trying to create.

Stagnation under Brezhnev 1964- 1982

In 1964 Leonid Brezhnev became the General Secretary of the Central Committee of the Communist Party. He would be the leader of the Soviet Union for 18 years until his death in 1982. Brezhnev was the second longest leader of the Soviet Union. The Brezhnev era involved rolling back many of the reforms of Khrushchev and a return to a more repressive regime. Despite his many years in office there were very few marriage policy changes under Brezhnev and many of the problems women faced from the previous eras continued to persist.

From 1964-1982 there was only one official marriage policy reform. In 1968 the law entitled “Principles of Legislation on Marriage and the Family of the USSR and the Union Republics” was passed. This was the last marriage policy reform of the Soviet Union (Shlapentokh 1984, 31). This law attempted to regulate how parents raised their children in the Soviet Union (Library of Congress Country Report Soviet Union). By this point, the idea of taking away children to be raised by institutions was no longer a popular idea. Instead, the government tried to regulate how children would be raised in their parent’s homes. This law told parents to raise their children according to the Moral Code of the Builder of Communism. This code was implemented in 1961 and had twelve tenets. It was a part of the Communist Morality implemented under Khrushchev. The most important of these tenants was to express a devotion to the Communist cause and the Soviet motherland (Field 2011). The Communist morality that parents were supposed to instill in their children was derived from these ideals. This Communist morality was a step to try and replace coercion in Soviet society with complete loyalty to the Soviet way of life (Field 2011). Parents were vital to the success of this new Communist

morality. If there was any way for the Communist morality to be successful Soviet citizens would need to be indoctrinated with it from birth. Parents were to be responsible for beginning the process of indoctrination to this new Soviet code.

One of the issues that reached a boiling point during this time period was in regard to the demographic issues in the Soviet Union. As discussed earlier in this paper, WWII and Stalin's purges killed a disproportionate number of men in Soviet society. This lack of men, coupled with the low birth rate in the Soviet Union caused severe demographic problems. During the Brezhnev era, especially in the 1970s, the government openly acknowledged these problems and began to try and create solutions to these issues (Library of Congress Soviet Union Country Report). The Congress of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union in 1976, 1981, and 1986 all attempted to instate policies that would solve these issues. These congresses attempted to encourage higher fertility rates for women and lower the divorce rate. Through these policies of actively encouraging women to have more children there was a slight rise in the birth rate in the 1970s and 1980s (Library of Congress Soviet Union Country Report). However, the slight rise in the birthrate was not enough to combat the demographic problems of the USSR.

The idea of dating services was discussed in this time period. It was thought that dating services could be used to solve the problem of single women. During this time period there were many working single mothers. Between their work, household chores, party activity, and childrearing these women did not have time to meet men (Shlapentokh 1984,151). Dating services were extremely controversial. Those who argued in favor of dating services had to justify themselves to the government. Some government officials found the idea of dating services problematic because they thought they would undermine the traditional understanding of marriage. Some argued that dating services were in line with official Soviet ideology while

others argued that it was not (Shlapentokh 1984, 159). In the mid-1970s, with increasing fears about the stagnate birth rate dating services were legalized in an attempt to increase the amount of marriages and births in the Soviet Union (Shlapentokh 1984, 167).

In this time period, like in earlier eras of the Soviet Union, there was a lack of women in high governmental positions. This issue was discussed under Brezhnev, but the lack of women was not thought of as problematic. It was thought that women were simply less interested in politics than men (Holland 1985, 208). This line of thinking is similar to previous eras, such as when the lack of women's participation in the Komsomol under Lenin was justified because it was argued that women were more interested in remaining in the private sphere than participating in party politics. Women during this time were present in government, but they were most prevalent in lower positions, such as secretaries in regional committees. Women at this time were active in the Komsomol and made up 57% of Komsomol low level committees (Holland 1985, 208). When surveyed if women thought it was problematic that there were so few women in the government, many women stated that it did not really matter whether women were in government or not because the men in government supported gender equality. It did not matter to them that their government officials were women or men because they believed that everything was already being done to create gender equality (Holland 1985, 210). It is difficult to determine how accurate these survey responses were to the true feelings of women of the time. There is a significant chance that women did not actually feel as if their male government officials were working towards gender equality, but knew that their responses were being monitored and were therefore afraid to answer these questions honestly. There is also a chance that these women actually did believe this. The important thing to note is that the survey responses of this time show us that the official ideology of this time wanted people to believe

that governmental officials were actively working to end gender inequality. Gender inequality was not an issue that needed to be vigorously discussed because officials were already doing everything possible to improve the situation of women. There was some very limited discussion about the need for more women within the government; however, very few policies were created to put more women in government positions. The only policies that were created helped to put more women in lower, district positions (Holland 1985, 210). The lack of women in government and supposed belief by women that their issues were being discussed helps to explain why there were so few policies regarding marriage and family life during this time. The women of this time period, whether because they believed they didn't need to or were too repressed by the government, did not push for reforms regarding marriage and family life.

Many of the issues that women faced in previous eras continued to worsen under Brezhnev. Issues regarding abortion, domestic work, and job access continued to affect marriage and family life in the Soviet Union. Abortion continued to be the only reliable form of birth control women had access to in the Soviet Union. The conditions under which women received abortions continued to be humiliating and unsanitary for women. Abortions were given without anesthetic. Abortions were performed with many women in the same room (Mamonova 1984, xix). Other home birth control methods were still used at this time. Many of these methods were ineffective and could have harmful effects on women. There was very little sex education at this time so women were not able to learn about better methods. Even had sex education been better in the Soviet Union and women knew about other methods, women still did not have access to these methods. Condoms continued to be in short supply and notoriously poorly made (Mamonova 1984, xx). The domestic sphere continued to be the main realm of women under Brezhnev. Women were still responsible for maintaining the home and taking care of children.

Propaganda of the time continued to encourage women to have the triple burden of having a job, raising a family, and being a good Communist Party member. There was some government encouragement for men to help their wives with domestic work. However, domestic work was not something a man was expected to do (Holland 1985, 210). Women's time and energies were still relegated to taking care of the home. Under Brezhnev, conditions of economic inequality continued to worsen for women. The ideology of the one wage family had dissipated under the economic hardships of Khrushchev. Though the idea of the one wage family was gone, women still found it difficult to secure employment.

In conclusion, the Brezhnev era was marked by stagnation throughout Communist society. This was no different in regards to marriage and family life. The issues women faced continued to persist and little was done to help women with these issues. The demographic issues of Soviet society reached a boiling point under Brezhnev. As a result, institutions, such as dating services were legalized to try and increase the marriage and birth rate of the country. Issues such as economic inequality, lack of access to birth control other than abortions, and responsibility for domestic work continued to negatively affect women.

Soviet Marriage Policy under Gorbachev

Mikhail Gorbachev was the final leader of the USSR. Gorbachev became the General Secretary of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union in 1985 and remained in power until 1991 when the Soviet Union was dissolved. The Gorbachev regime inherited many problems from previous Soviet leaders. Many of these problems had not been effectively addressed for many years and had snowballed into fundamental flaws that would help contribute to the downfall of the Soviet Union. One of the major problems was in regard to marriage and family life. The structures governing marriage and family life were in dire need of reform. However, the last

official marriage policy reform was in 1968 and it did little to actually reform marriage or family life. It did nothing to improve women's status in marriage. Gorbachev had no official marriage policies or decrees. However, like his predecessors he used women's issues, in particular marriage and family life, to shape society.

The two words that are most often used to describe the era of Gorbachev are glasnost and perestroika. Glasnost means openness. It refers to a policy of transparency in activities of the Soviet Union and allowing information to circulate more freely. Gorbachev hoped that this openness would decrease corruption in the Soviet Union. Perestroika means restructuring. Gorbachev hoped to restructure the economic and political system of the Soviet Union. These two policies affected issues regarding marriage and family life. The more open society of Gorbachev allowed more women's movements to form. Previously, any political or social movement that did not fall in line with the official Soviet ideology of the time was not allowed to exist in the Soviet Union; anyone who was a member of an unofficial movement could be arrested. With the reforms of Gorbachev there was an increase in the number of interest groups in the Soviet Union. Groups dedicated to women's issues emerged during this time. This was the first time period where NGOs (non governmental organizations) and women's right's movements became prevalent in the Soviet Union (Mamonova 1984, 125).

An example of an organization that developed to help women was the Institute for Development of International Business in Leningrad (now St. Petersburg). This institute aimed to help women become more economically active (Gottlick 2001, 266). Women's environmental groups also became very active during this time period. While these groups did not directly work to help women change their lives, they did have an effect on marriage and family life. Widows were especially involved in these environmental groups (Mirovitskaia 2001, 238). The

environmental organizations gave women a chance to become politically active. The emergence of these organizations allowed women a vehicle to express their discontent with the Soviet system. Despite the emergence of these organizations, there were not great changes to women's daily lives. Some of these organizations might have made significant changes if given more time, but with the fall of the Soviet Union and the political and economic difficulties of the 1990s these organizations were unable to make major changes for women. These organizations also had a difficult time establishing themselves in the Soviet Union at this time and after the fall of the USSR because of a negative perception of feminism in Soviet countries. Soviet ideology taught women that Western feminism did not understand the issues that Soviet women faced. Many of the feminist scholars who came into the country reinforced this idea because they asked the wrong questions and did not have a complete understanding of the issues Soviet women faced (Heaton 1997, 36). These feminist scholars helped to enforce negative stereotypes of feminism. Anti-feminist Soviet ideology has had a lasting effect to this day.

The Gorbachev regime used ideological methods to change marriage and family life. Under Gorbachev, there was propaganda supporting the idea of "the womanly mission." This new mission attempted to alleviate the burden on women, but in fact only complicated issues for women. Gorbachev wanted "to make it possible for women to return to the purely womanly mission" (Noonan 1996, 111). By this he meant to encourage women to redirect their energies towards being wives and mothers. It was an attempt to relieve women of the triple burden they faced. Political and economic activity was to be second to women's domestic concerns. By saying that the mission of women was located in the private not the public sphere it limited the government approved options for women. Women were now to stay in the home. This new mission that Gorbachev expressed was full of contradictory ideas. At the same time Gorbachev

was telling women their place was in the home he also was encouraging women to become more active in public life (Wilson 2001, 191). This new mission was problematic because it limited choices for women. Yes, it was an attempt by Gorbachev to improve the lives of women by decreasing their burdens; however, it did this not by asking less of women but by restricting what should be important to them. This caused problems for women who were active Communist Party members or laborers. By labeling home and domestic life the main mission for women it delegitimized women who focused their lives on other things.

Women continued to face health issues in the Soviet Union. The issue of abortion, as in previous eras, was one of the major health concerns for women. Abortions continued to be extremely painful and humiliating for women, but yet, they remained the only form of birth control available for the majority of women. Birth control methods had not changed significantly in the USSR since the 1930s (Bodrova 2001, 313). Despite the many problems with abortion, women continued to limit their fertility. During the late 1980s the birth rate declined sharply while the death rate rose (Bodrova 2001, 312). The declining birthrate was a direct result of the deep economic and social problems the USSR was facing at this time. As part of glasnost, new information about comparative birthrates was released at this time. It was found that maternal mortality rates were six times the rate of the United States and that 75% of Soviet women faced serious complications during their pregnancies (Bodrova 2001, 313). Because of the opening up of society under Gorbachev these issues could be more freely discussed in ways that had never before been possible in the Soviet Union. Knowing about these statistics caused women to critically evaluate what the government was doing wrong.

For the first time in the Soviet Union a First Lady, the wife of the General Secretary of the Communist Party, was very visible in Soviet society. Raisa Maksimovna Gorbacheva was

relatively well educated. She received a degree in Sociology in 1967 (Noonan 2001, 139). Gorbacheva attracted attention in the domestic and international communities because she was articulate and stylish. She was the first Soviet First Lady who would speak to the press on political issues; previously, most of the wives of Soviet leaders had been in the background and not involved in politics (Noonan 140). The poise and intelligence of Gorbacheva made her popular with the international press. Gorbacheva was perceived very differently in the Soviet Union. She was the only First Lady whose appearance and education showed the vast inequality in Soviet life. This caused social unrest in a supposedly equal society. It was also known that she influenced her husband's political decisions (Noonan 139). All of this made her unpopular in the USSR. It is interesting to look at Gorbacheva because the reaction Soviet citizens had to her illuminate issues in the Soviet Union. The unpopularity of Gorbacheva shows that traditional understandings about how marriage and family life should be constructed were still very present in Soviet society. Society was not comfortable having a woman impact the highest level of Soviet politics. The fact that Gorbacheva had influence with her husband is partially why Gorbachev became so unpopular because it was thought that the fact he listened to a woman made him weak (Noonan 2001, 140). Gorbacheva had the potential to greatly affect the policies regarding women under Gorbachev. It was well known that Gorbachev consulted his wife on political issues (Noonan 2001, 139). However, Gorbacheva was not an advocate of women's issues. If Gorbacheva had been more interested in reforming women's issues the way the Gorbachev government treated marriage and family life might have been very different. Very few women in the Soviet Union had the ability to have their voices heard about the issues they faced like Gorbacheva did. However, she did not use this opportunity.

The unpopularity of Raisa Gorbacheva may have been a backlash against the perceived stereotype of the aggressive Soviet wife. During the Gorbachev era there was an image, which was sometimes a reality, of the very aggressive wife. Some women had become more dominant in their relationships because of the current Soviet culture. There was still the legacy of WWII and Stalin's purges that created a culture of male scarcity which led to women staying with "bad" husbands. Often times this forced women to become controlling to ensure the survival of the family. Many women were tired of the bearing the triple burden of being a worker, wife, and good Soviet citizen. They saw that their husbands were not subject to the same burden and became unhappy with the unequal relationships within their marriage. When women were surveyed during this time period over half of women disapproved of how their husbands spent their time and money (Shlapentokh 1985, 204). Women became assertive to try and change their husbands' behavior. Yet many men were uncomfortable with the idea of having a wife that was more dominant than them. Divorce rates were significantly higher when the woman was the more authoritative person in the relationship (Shlapentokh 1984, 204). The traditional understanding of marriage where the man was the most dominant partner in the relationship was still considered the ideal. This ideal was not achieved by many families. In a survey of Moscow high school students, it was found that teenagers were three times more likely to say their mother was the ruling authority in the household than their father (Shlapentokh 1984, 204). The unpopularity of Gorbacheva can be seen as reflective of the fact that a large section of Soviet society was unhappy with the changing role of women in marriage. The fact that Gorbachev listened to his wife on political matters made people think that Gorbacheva was dominant in the relationship. The perceived power of women in relationships was seen as very problematic.

Society did not like to see its issues reflected in the leadership of the country. There was a backlash against Gorbacheva because of her supposed power over her husband.

The perceived power of women in marital relationships did not lead to a restructuring of domestic responsibility during this time period. This shows that though women were perceived as dominant, they were still the gender with less power. An example of this is the fact that women were still the gender primarily responsible for household work. Many Soviet men were unwilling to accept an equal division of household chores (Shlapentokh 1984, 203). A large segment of society believed that household work could never be equally divided between women and men (Shlapentokh 1984, 204). These beliefs made equality in marriage extremely difficult to achieve. It also placed a disproportionate amount of work on women.

The Gorbachev era saw many significant changes to Soviet society. These changes affected how marriage and family life were organized. The openness of society under Gorbachev allowed for the proliferation of women's movements. Issues such as abortion and unequal division of household labor continued to affect women. Gorbachev also added to the challenges women faced with the creation of the doctrine of the womanly mission. The negative domestic perception Raisa Gorbacheva was a reflection of the structure of marriage during this time and how Soviet citizens felt uncomfortable with the dominance of women in marriage. Soviet society was in a sharp decline under Gorbachev. He attempted to make radical changes to the Soviet Union, but ultimately these changes helped to lead to the downfall of the Soviet Union.

Conclusion

In this paper I summarized the marriage and family policy of the Soviet Union by looking at the modifications each Soviet leader made. Each leader saw these areas of life as tools to create changes to society. Under the leadership of Lenin there was a commitment to completely

reorganizing life in the Soviet Union. This commitment led to restructuring of societal institutions, including marriage and family life. During this time, there was the hope that these institutions would become outdated and no longer necessary for society. In an attempt to do this, divorce was simplified and new organizations were put in place to perform domestic tasks. Unfortunately, Lenin died before any of these changes were in place long enough to actually radically transform society.

When Stalin came to power in 1922 he implemented policies that reflected a different understanding of how marriage and family life should be used. He rolled back the reforms of marriage that Lenin made. Unlike Lenin, Stalin did not wish to destroy the institution of marriage and the family; instead, he wanted to make the family the basic unit of society and a tool for policing. This led to policies that made it more difficult to divorce. Events during this time, such as WWII, greatly affected future marriage policy because the Soviet Union experienced great losses during the Second World War, especially of men. This created severe demographic problems for the Soviet Union that would have lasting ramifications.

With the death of Stalin in 1953, Khrushchev came into power. One of the hallmarks of the Khrushchev regime was de-Stalinization. Many of the policies of Stalin were reformed during this time, such as the purges and mass policing. Marriage and family policy were among the institutions affected by de-Stalinization reforms. The divorce process was simplified and women were allowed greater access to abortions. Following Khrushchev, the Brezhnev era was marked by stagnation and inefficiency. This was reflected in marriage policy. The family life problems of the Soviet Union had been steadily increasing and the economic stagnation of Brezhnev only increased these problems.

The Gorbachev regime that came to power in 1988 tried to solve some of the problems that the Soviet Union faced through policies of glasnost and perestroika. Marriage and family life was affected by these policies, however, the Soviet Union fell before these reforms were in effect long enough to see whether or not they would have been successful. Ultimately, the collapse of the Soviet Union meant that none of the reforms to marriage and family life enacted by Soviet leaders continued to be implemented; rather, the Soviet Union collapsed the institutions of marriage and the traditional family were still strong and continue to be strong today.

A political science perspective can be used to examine the family policies of the Soviet Union. Though the domestic sphere is not commonly examined by traditional political scientists, it is something that can and should be understood as political. In this paper I gave many examples of how the domestic sphere was used in politics. Traditionally understood women's issues, such as domestic work and raising children, became items that were discussed politically. Issues such as who takes care of children, who does housework, who is the main breadwinner of the family, etc... are all political. The Soviet leaders understood these issues were political, or at the very least, knew that these items could be used to bring about political changes because they were thought to be mechanisms that could change society. The reason that Soviet leaders put so much time and effort into creating policies that affected this area is because they knew that the domestic sphere had important ramifications for social relations more generally. Hence, to change society they sought to change, or at least shape, the domestic sphere.

By looking at these policies with a political science lens one can see that the Soviet policies demonstrate difficulties of policy implementation. As shown in this paper, every Soviet leader created marriage and family policies that directly dealt with women's issues, but yet, very few women were consulted when creating these policies. Leaders were perplexed when policies

aimed towards women- such as trying to increase the birth rate were ineffective. They were ineffective in part because women's voices were not heard on these issues. Had the government consulted women on why they decided to have very few children they might have been able to identify and then fix the conditions that were causing women to not want to have children. Instead, these policies were created by high ranking male Soviet officials who were removed from the everyday problems of women and as a result did not fix the problems women faced. A lesson about policy creation can be learned from this, for policies trying to change an aspect of society to be effective they need to actually consult the group whose behavior they are trying to change. Assuming that government policy makers understand the problem without consulting the affected group is not enough.

Political science also provides ways to examine the effect of the private sphere on the larger domestic and international political system. The case of the USSR shows that domestic politics do matter since domestic political issues were one important reason for the collapse of the Soviet Union. In particular, I discussed in this paper how the family problems of the Soviet Union caused great troubles; society could not flourish with a rapidly declining birthrate and aging population. With the aging population came economic stagnation and a general decline of society. This is a significant part of why the Soviet Union fell.

Another way to examine the issues discussed in this paper is through using Gender and Women's Studies concepts. This field examines power relationships and argues against understanding power as simply top- down, coercive power. The typical power relationship discussed in the Soviet Union is this sort of top down power. It is true, the government used this type of power, especially under Stalin. The policies were implemented and imposed by the government onto the people. There were very few ways everyday people could directly give their

input and affect these policies. However, despite the prevalence of top down power in the Soviet Union there were different power relationships that should be looked at in the Soviet Union. Feminist scholars argue that these different types of power relationships are important to look at. The people pushed back against these policies and affected the creation of new policy. For example, during the Khrushchev era the government created propaganda and official policies to encourage people to have more children and raise the birthrate in the Soviet Union. Despite the fact that the government controlled many aspects of citizen's lives and tried to use top down power to make people have more children, women especially resisted this and did not have more children. I am not arguing that most people actively resisted having more children as a way to push back against the power of the system, but rather, people resisted the coercion of the government through exercising agency over their own lives. By not simply bowing down to the top down coercive power of the government, the people of the Soviet Union forced the government to create new policies and employ different mechanisms to try and affect change in society.

Analyzing marriage and family policy in the Soviet Union from a Gender and Women's Studies perspective also illustrates how difficult it is to fundamentally transform traditional family and marriage practices. Under Lenin, at the beginning of the Soviet Union, the government leaders wanted to completely revolutionize society. The main way they did this was through institutional reform. This paper specifically discussed how the institutions of marriage, child rearing, and domestic work were all considerably changed under Lenin. Lenin wanted to make marriage obsolete and make domestic work and child rearing done by state run institutions. Ultimately, these institutional changes either failed or were disbanded by his successors. A Gender and Women's Studies perspective tells us that changing institutions is not simply a

matter of changing policies, rules, or laws. Individuals and ideas create and are created by institutions. Simply changing one of these three things is not enough. Most Soviet citizens still held traditional ideas about gender roles and what marriage and family life should be. The institutional changes of Lenin might have eventually changed people's ideas about these concepts, however, with the death of Lenin in 1924 and the rise of Joseph Stalin, the institutional changes were not around long enough to change how people thought about these concepts.

Change cannot happen without commitment from the leaders in society and from the people themselves. Certain aspects of society are especially difficult to change, such as the institutions of marriage and family life. At the time of the Soviet revolution, these institutions had largely not changed in Russia or the other Soviet countries for hundreds of years. The Soviet revolution attempted to bring about abrupt change. It can be debated whether or not most of the Soviet leaders actually wanted to significantly change these institutions. Under Lenin there certainly seemed to be a commitment to transforming society but this quickly changed with the reforms of Stalin and his successors. Without the commitment of Soviet leaders to gender equality there was little chance that the Soviet Union would ever see the creation of true equality between genders. This paper also showed how creating policies is not enough to create change. Even in the most repressive and controlled of societies (such as Stalin's regime) people still found ways to resist and push back against society.

It was also shown in this paper how strong the institution of marriage and traditional understandings of the family really are. It takes more to de-legitimize them than a few government policies and propaganda. Even women, who often are the most oppressed by the institution of marriage, did not quickly jump at the chance to dissolve this institution. There are many theories why this may be. I argue that this was because of the ineffective policies of Soviet

leaders and the fact that stability and the status quo are often considered preferable to the unknown.

In conclusion, I hope that this paper has given insights into the marriage and family policy of the Soviet Union. What I most hope for readers to take away from this is that these issues do matter even though they are in the domestic sphere and that some issues are very difficult to change.

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