

CfP

What happened to the nuclear family in the 20th century?

Empirical and epistemological findings in comparative perspective

Organiser:

Seminar of Folklore Studies / European Ethnology (Elisabeth Timm) in cooperation with the Historical Seminar / Emmy Noether junior research group "Family Values and Social Change: The US-American Family in the 20th Century" (Isabel Heinemann), University of Münster, Germany

Date, place: 31 January 2013 – 2 February 2013, University of Münster, Germany

Deadline for proposals: 20 August 2012

Family and kinship have attracted a new attention in the social and cultural-studies disciplines. This can not only be seen from a quantitative increase in the "family" or "kinship" as research subjects but also from the qualitatively new perspectives: the "new history of kinship" differentiates between "customary" and "official" kinship (M. Lanzinger/E. Saurer); in sociology, network-analysis approaches have thrown up new questions; in ethnology and cultural and social anthropology, the "new kinship studies" have developed concepts such as "belonging", "relatedness" and "doing kinship" (J. Carsten, P. Schweitzer).

It is the aim of the conference to refine the analysis of "family" in empirical and epistemological perspective. To achieve this, we address the following realms:

- *The historic presence of nuclear-family lifestyles*: in the *Trente Glorieuses* (J. Fourastié on France in the decades from 1945 to 1975) of the Fordist type of regulation, in particular in the Western industrial countries, the male-breadwinner family was a widespread lifestyle.
- *Political mobilisation of the family in the present day*: the post-Fordist welfare regulation has left the culturally pessimistic discourse of the "disintegration of the family" of "family decline" behind, calls on "family" as a "resource" and in this way connects traditional family and gender ideals with new references and forms of relations, which on the one hand may work as re-traditionalisation but are also described as "unbounded families" (K. Jurczyk/P. Szymenderski);

- *“Family” as a normative reference*: in the political and institutional shaping of societal differentiation and with regard to the governing of social inequality, nuclear-family stereotypes have functioned and still function as a disciplining and normative instrument both in the Fordist welfare regulation as well as after the dismantling of state benefits of “welfare capitalism” (G. Esping-Andersen);
- *Reification of the “Euro-American family” beyond nature and culture*: in the context of new forms of connection, such as in the use of reproductive medicine and in transnational adoption, research of cultural and social anthropology has noticed not only a change but also a recursion to traditional ideals and lifestyles both on the part of the institutions and enterprises involved and with regard to the accompanying state and statutory regulations and in the everyday practices of the users of these forms; traditional and nuclear-family ideals also manifest themselves in popular culture as well as in film and TV families;
- *Critique of the specifics of a “modern nuclear family”*: Revisions of historical (above all Ph. Ariès) and findings of social and cultural anthropology on the specifics of the modern or “Euro-American family” (M. Strathern) discuss the extent to which forms that are considered modern and/or Western inventions, such as “childhood”, “romantic love” or the “nuclear family”, nevertheless may not have an older history or were and are culturally widespread lifestyles and ways of love (J. Goody, *The Theft of History*).

Such contacts of empirical and epistemological questions are not new. In *Studien über Autorität und Familie* [Studies on Authority and the Family] by the Frankfurt Institute for Social Research (1936), Herbert Marcuse had already deconstructed the naturalising, ahistorical concept of the family in German-language sociology (in particular W.H. Riehl); in *Outline of a Theory of Practice* (Fr. orig. 1972), with the formula “kinship is a thing that one does and out of which one makes something,” Pierre Bourdieu overcame the dichotomy between ontologising and deconstructivist approaches; in discourse-analysis perspective, post-structural studies understood families as complex articulation of orders between the subject and society (J. Donzelot) and thereby overcame their reduction to a social form; since the 1970s, social history and historical anthropology acknowledged a spontaneous concept of the family as analytically unsuitable and expressly insisted on the necessity of the clarification of its respective use (i.a. K. Hausen, C. Lipp, M. Mitterauer, H. Rosenbaum, D.W. Sabean, M. Segalen, R. Sieder).

What the early as well as the current revisions of the research share is that on the one hand they have shown the family/nuclear family (with a heterosexual pair of parents) to be an ethnocentric construct of the West and the socio-centric norm of bourgeois milieus. On the other hand, at the same time it was pointed out that according to this critique of the analytical approaches the empirical analysis of the manifestations of the “family” needed to be further refined and more precisely situated empirically and epistemologically.

With regard to the analytical perspectives, on the one hand there is a broad consensus that normative or socially and historically strongly connected definitions of “family” or “kinship” are not sustainable. On the other hand this poses the question of the definability of “family/kinship” as a research subject that is still to be differentiated from other social forms (friendship, neighbourhood): The latest historical (D.W. Sabeau/S. Teuscher/J. Mathieu) and anthropological approaches (M. Sahlins) therefore discuss a new post-deconstructivist, definition-based approach to the research subject.

The planned conference is to draw up both approaches to the theme – put briefly: the question of the empirical proof of familial lifestyles in the process of historical change and in the current variants on the one hand, and the reflection of analytical categories and definitions of the research subject on the other – as not being mutually exclusive.

It is intended rather to bring these into contact with one another, inasmuch as “the family” will be regarded as a central and productive “epistemic object” (L. Daston, H.-J. Rheinberger) of the investigation of social and cultural forms.

This is to take place based on five thematic fields. Their differentiation is not categorical, but in each case emphasises a different element of the “evidence of the family”.

We are calling for proposals for papers which relate to one of the panels on an empirical basis. A contribution to the question of the conference is more important than the relation to the approach of a specific discipline. Each panel starts with an invited paper from a convener.

Conference structure

Keynote:

David W. Sabeau:

„Kinship in incest discourse since the 19th century“

Panel A) The family in scientific, political and economic criticism

What is the relationship between lived forms of the family and their political, economic and scientific criticism (e.g. in the women's movement, in the Frankfurt School)? To what extent does the respective critique constitute, change or support everyday practices and family values and concepts?

Convenor and invited contribution: Kristina Schulz, Historical Seminar, University of Bern/CH:

„Neuorganisation von Produktion und Reproduktion“ (S. Firestone): Kritik und Utopie der Familie in der kognitiven Orientierung der neuen Frauenbewegung“

Panel B) The family of experts: norms, assistance, advice

How does the relationship between the modern thesis of the “decline of the family” and the developing complementary “consultancy role” (J. Donzelot) that accompanies it shape the family in politics and in the social sciences (e.g. as social engineering (Etzemüller 2009) or in the form of “social experts” (Raphael/Hardtwig 2003)? In what sections can relations and negotiations between everyday practices and normative, political, institutional demands be researched in an empirically founded way? Can this be understood as a “change in values”? (R. Inglehart, H. Klages) (critically on this Rödter 2006).

Convenor and invited contribution: Miriam Gebhardt, Historical Studies Dept., University of Constance/DE:

„Zwischen Norm und Gefühl. Die Einbeziehung der Expertise in die Familie“

Panel C) The family of politics: from the germ of the state to governmental resource

When and on the basis of which policies can a change from the political positioning of the family as primordial and private (such as in “welfare capitalism”, G. Esping-Andersen) to the family as a resource of societal reproduction (according to the neoliberal remodelling of the modern welfare states) be identified? What changes and rearrangements (e.g. of gender relations) and what continuities can be seen in the process and to what extent are these fungible for the respective manifestations of power? (Heady/Kohli 2010)

Convenor and invited contribution: Jürgen Martschukat, Dept. of North American History, University of Erfurt/DE:

„Regieren über Familie“

Panel D) Popular families: desires, wishes, ideals and forms of praxis

Are the proverbial picture-book families (or family images in popular media formats) actually clearly coded (Western, modern, heterosexual, etc.)? Where and how do vernacular concepts of customary or transformed families articulate themselves? (e.g. the articles in Heinemann 2012, Section IV: Fatherhood/Motherhood and the Media)

Convenor and invited contribution: Uta Fenske, Centre for Gender Studies, University of Siegen/DE:

Title: tba

Panel E Family as knowledge: uses of reproductive technology, “new kinship” as an analytical approach

To what extent does the establishing and use of reproductive technology and practices of transnational adoption involve a new explanation of family forms in everyday life? What is the relationship between re-traditionalisation and the legitimisation such families (e.g. B. Franklin/Roberts 2006, Briggs 2003) and the related upheavals of previous orders?

Convenor and invited contribution: Maren Klotz, Institute of European Ethnology, Humboldt University Berlin and University of Exeter, DE/GB:

„Kinformation: Verwandtschaftliches Wissensmanagement in Keimzellspende-Familien und die Wissensanthropologie der New Kinship Studies“

Please send your proposal for a contribution (title and abstract with max. 300 words and a short biographical note) (German or English) by 20 August 2012 to:

volkskunde.institut@uni-muenster.de

Conference languages: German and English.

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Further information in the conference concept (German and English):

<http://www.uni-muenster.de/Volkskunde/Aktuelles/index.shtml>

<http://www.uni-muenster.de/Geschichte/hist-sem/NwG-ZG/>