

# Rassegna Italiana di Sociologia

## CALL FOR PAPERS

### OVERCOMING FAMILY BOUNDARIES

#### The promises and situatedness of the «family practices» perspective

Call for papers, Special Issue of «Rassegna Italiana di Sociologia», edited by CHIARA BERTONE (University of Eastern Piedmont) and CATERINA SATTA (University of Cagliari)

D.H. Morgan's concept of family practices, which is at the basis of his theorisation of family as an active and ongoing process, represented a turning point in international studies on family relations in the 1990s (Morgan 1996). This processual perspective questioned any form of reification of family and centred on agency and everyday practices. It set the premise for substantial innovation in a research field which, in those years, was becoming increasingly marginalised (Morgan 2011). According to David Morgan, family studies at that time were either canonized into functionalist models, or, in a more dynamic direction, they were assimilating with the developing field of gender studies. The latter, however, risked constricting the innovative potential for feminist analyses of the family and reasserting the marginality in the sociological field of a topic that would continue to be considered a «women's issue». A focus on inequalities in the gender division of work, moreover, bore the risk of promoting a view of the family as a unit mainly based on obligations, neglecting other relevant dimensions of family life. Through a practice turn in family studies (Schatzki *et al.* 2001), Morgan saw the possibility of developing a new analytical perspective, whose heuristic relevance allowed it to overcome existing thematic and conceptual boundaries. His interactionist and constructivist approach resonated with the deconstructive and reflexive interpretative intellectual climate of the time, and he was influenced by feminism, ethnomethodology, postmodern thought, the biographical turn and, in part, the work of Bourdieu. Many subsequent studies owe their insights into changes in and pluralization of family configurations and experiences to the adoption of this critical perspective (Smart, Neale 1999; Weeks *et al.* 2001; Gabb, Fink 2015; Finch 2007; Dermott, Seymour 2011; Hall, Holdsworth 2016).

Almost twenty-five years on from the publication of *Family Connections: An Introduction to Family Studies* (1996), this special issue addresses the international influence of Morgan's contribution, with the aim of understanding what happens when the notion of family practices travels beyond the British context in which it originated, crossing linguistic, cultural and social borders, and interweaves with other situated theorizations on the family.

Rassegna Italiana di Sociologia

Società editrice il Mulino, Strada Maggiore 37 – 40125 Bologna

Redazione: Valeria Piro, ris@mulino.it

# Rassegna Italiana di Sociologia

Resisting the implicit, universalistic claims of an anglophone hegemonic perspective, the effort to provincialise Morgan's approach – acknowledging its epistemological and geographical situatedness – implies more than a descriptive tracking of how it has been imported into other countries' research. It means understanding how its translation and use interplays with the manifold configurations that the move from understanding family as «functional unit» to viewing it as «relational connections» (Gabb 2008) has taken in different geographical contexts.

It also means making sense of the resistance his innovative way of understanding family dynamics has encountered in some countries. This relates to its «mistranslation» into local sociological traditions that have privileged certain research areas and epistemologies, and more broadly into public discourse and knowledge production on family grounded on specific social, cultural and political histories and welfare state settlements (Naldini *et al.* 2018). This is particularly apparent for areas whose welfare states have kept family obligations as a fundamental pillar of caring provision, for example Southern European countries (Saraceno 2016). This special issue seeks to explore «peripheries» of knowledge production from a situated perspective, within Europe and beyond, where research areas, epistemologies and theoretical debates have guided the development of a practice approach in family studies.

In fact, by deconstructing an essentialist and normative vision of the family, such an approach allows the boundaries of what is conceived as family to be pushed and transformed from being a starting to a landing point in research focusing upon other aspects of everyday life. Indeed, it provides one way of showing how family practices can be linked to or seen as other kinds of practices. How does a family practice approach relate to concepts of everyday life, and to the life course perspective? How do family practices intersect with working, schooling and consumption practices (i.e. shape our working schedule, are involved in children's schooling and choices of what kind of car or house to buy, or planning holidays)? How can time and space be reinterpreted in the light of our family relationships?

Besides exploring the dismantling of the thematic boundaries of family research, we can ask how Morgan's proposal has interacted with other expressions of critical positioning towards the normative and oppressive implications of family studies. Given the key role of feminism in inspiring Morgan, how does a family practices approach sit in relation to feminist scholarly traditions, and how does this play out in relation to the new paths in research practice and theorizing that transfeminist and queer movements are opening?

Looking at present developments, the special issue aims to specifically address how the critical, anti-essential and anti-individualistic potential of the concept of family practices can unfold in current global dynamics, where conflicts over the re-naturalization of social hierarchies revolve around the power of defining the family, its functions and its boundaries (Kuhar, Paternotte 2017).

Finally, we would like to interrogate what a situated perspective on Morgan's contribution can mean at a time when research practices are increasingly transnational, characterized by new forms of circulation of knowledge and by precarious and diasporic biographies.

# Rassegna Italiana di Sociologia

We invite papers engaged in a dialogue with Morgan's contributions from a situated perspective and addressing, among others, the following topics:

- Epistemologies of the practice turn in family research
- Implications of a practice perspective in interdisciplinary research
- Family practices and performative perspectives on gender and sexuality
- Family practices and intergenerational relations
- Family practices and life course approaches
- Embodiment in family practices
- Temporal and spatial dimensions of family practices
- Studying social reproduction through practices
- Theories and practices of care
- The family dimension of working practices
- Consumption and leisure time as family practices
- The family dimension of educational practices
- Mobility as a family practice
- Intercultural family practices
- Transnational family practices

## Deadlines and guidelines

Abstracts are due by **March 1, 2021**. All abstracts (500 words), with 5 keywords in English, should be sent as e-mail attachments (Word format) to: chiara.bertone@uniupo.it and caterina.satta@unica.it.

Decisions concerning the selection of articles will be given by **April 1, 2021**. Submission of first versions of articles to be refereed should be sent to the editors by **July 15, 2021**. Articles, written in English, should follow the journal guidelines and sent to: chiara.bertone@uniupo.it and caterina.satta@unica.it.

Communication from the editors concerning the peer-review process will take place by **September 15, 2021**.

Revised versions sent to the editors by **November 1, 2021**.  
Publication on **Issue 4/2021**.

## REFERENCES

- Dermott, E., Seymour, J., eds. (2011) *Displaying Families: A New Concept for the Sociology of Family Life*, London, Palgrave Macmillan.
- Finch, J. (2007) *Displaying families*, in «Sociology», 41, pp. 65-81.
- Gabb, J. (2008) *Researching Intimacy in Families*, London, Palgrave.
- Gabb, J., Fink, J. (2015) *Couple Relationships in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century*, London, Palgrave Macmillan.
- Hall, S.M., Holdsworth, C. (2016) *Family practices, holiday and the everyday*, in «Mobilities», 11,

Rassegna Italiana di Sociologia

Società editrice il Mulino, Strada Maggiore 37 – 40125 Bologna  
Redazione: Valeria Piro, ris@mulino.it

# Rassegna Italiana di Sociologia

2, pp. 284-302.

- Kuhar, R., Paternotte, D., eds. (2017) *Anti-gender Campaigns in Europe: Mobilizing Against Equality*, Laham, Rowman & Littlefield.
- Morgan, D.H.J. (1996) *Family Connections: An Introduction to Family Studies*, Cambridge, Polity Press.
- Morgan, D.H.J. (2011) *Rethinking Family Practices*, Berlino, Springer.
- Naldini, M., Satta, C., Ghigi, R. (2018) *Doing family through gender, doing Gender through family. Exploring social inequalities and cultural changes in everyday parenting. An introduction*, in «Sociologica», 12, 3, pp. 1-10.
- Saraceno, C. (2016) *Varieties of familialism: Comparing four Southern European and East Asian welfare regimes*, in «Journal of European Social Policy», 26, 4, pp. 314-26.
- Schatzki, T.R., Knorr-Cetina, K., Von Savigny, E., eds. (2001) *The Practice Turn in Contemporary Theory*, London, Routledge.
- Smart, C., Neale, B. (1999) *Family Fragments*, Cambridge, Polity Press.
- Weeks, J., Heaphy, B., Donovan, C. (2001) *Same Sex Intimacies. Families of Choice and Other Life Experiments*, Cambridge, Routledge.