



The Palgrave Handbook of Family Sociology in Europe

Edited by

Anna-Maija Castrén · Vida Česnuitytė
Isabella Crespi · Jacques-Antoine Gauthier
Rita Gouveia · Claude Martin
Almudena Moreno Mínguez
Katarzyna Suwada

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“Skillfully crafted around a diversity of concepts, theories, and methods, this handbook represents a wealth of knowledge on family change in twenty-first century Europe. It is a tribute to years of research, debate, and cross-country networking at the European Sociological Association and beyond. In thought-provoking and comprehensive contributions, European family sociologists invite us to explore the changing terrain of family and intimate lives in terms of relationships, proximity, gender, care, parenting, fertility, inequalities, migration, life course and family policy.”

—Karin Wall, *Research Professor, ICS Institute of Social Sciences, University of Lisbon, Portugal*

“The handbook provides an excellent blend of reassessment and reflection on what we know and how we know about families and intimate lives in Europe. Critical overviews and new insights are offered across a carefully chosen range of starting points.”

—Lynn Jamieson, *Professor of Sociology, University of Edinburgh, UK, and series editor for Palgrave Macmillan Studies in Family and Intimate Life*

“This handbook is an excellent compendium of recent scholarship on the sociology of the family by European scholars. It will be a valuable resource for American scholars who wish to keep up with the best research in Europe.”

—Andrew Cherlin, *Professor of Sociology and Public Policy, Johns Hopkins University, USA*

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Editors

Anna-Maija Castrén
Department of Social Sciences
University of Eastern Finland
Kuopio, Finland

Vida Česnuitytė
Faculty of Human and Social Studies
Mykolas Romeris University
Vilnius, Lithuania

Isabella Crespi
Department of Education
Cultural Heritage and Tourism
University of Macerata, Macerata, Italy

Jacques-Antoine Gauthier
University of Lausanne
Lausanne, Switzerland

Rita Gouveia
Institute of Social Sciences
University of Lisbon
Lisbon, Portugal

Claude Martin
EHESP
CNRS (National Centre of Scientific
Research)
Rennes, France

Almudena Moreno Mínguez
Campus María Zambrano
University of Valladolid
Segovia, Spain

Katarzyna Suwada
Institute of Sociology
Nicolaus Copernicus University
Toruń, Poland

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PREFACE

The edited collection *The Palgrave Handbook of Family Sociology in Europe* is a result of a joint effort of members of the European Sociological Association's Research Network 'Sociology of Families and Intimate Lives' (ESA RN13). As researchers and university teachers, we have frequently experienced the lack of high-quality English volumes on family phenomena that comprehensively presented the theoretical and methodological approaches used by contemporary sociologists from different parts of Europe. In order to rectify this, we invited scholars from various European countries (Belgium, the Czech Republic, Denmark, Estonia, Finland, France, Germany, Ireland, Italy, Lithuania, The Netherlands, Norway, Poland, Portugal, Romania, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland, the UK) to contribute to this volume. The main idea was that increased awareness about the research being conducted in different parts of the continent would be invaluable to the development of the European sociological community.

Original manuscripts from over 60 prominent scholars were selected using a double-blind review process. Consequently, the handbook provides an extensive overview of a variety of family forms, trajectories, policies, and values in different societal contexts. Not only does the handbook consider topical themes in family sociology as an academic discipline, it presents the empirical realities of European societies in order to familiarise various audiences—researchers, students, politicians, and family practitioners—with recent findings in the field. Because of its extensive contents, we hope that this handbook will become an integral part of European family sociology and that it will also stimulate international academic debates on family and intimate lives in the future.

National restrictions and lockdowns, which have heavily impacted academic research and teaching since spring 2020, have interrupted the completion of the handbook as the authors, reviewers, and editors had to adjust to the 'new normal' brought about by the COVID-19 pandemic. We want

to express our sincere gratitude to everyone who has contributed to this handbook during these extraordinary times, particularly the following people: Susana Atalaia, Jonathan Bradshaw, Benedicte Brahic, Julia Brannen, Valentina Cuzzocrea, Katherine Davies, Anna Escobedo, Charlotte Faircloth, Asuncion Fresnoza-Flot, Myriam Girardin, Marzia Grassi, Loveday Hodson, Jana Javornik, Majella Kilkey, Łukasz Krzyżowski, Francesca Lagomarsino, Mafalda Leitão, Åsa Lundqvist, Dawn Mannay, Sofia Marinho, Rense Nieuwenhuis, Rebecca O’Connell, Jolanta Perek-Białas, Vasco Ramos, Eveline Reisenuer, Clémentine Rossier, Lisa Smyth, Olivier Thevenon, Gil Viry, Karin Wall, and Minna Zechner.

Kuopio, Finland
Vilnius, Lithuania
Macerata, Italy
Lausanne, Switzerland
Lisbon, Portugal
Rennes, France
Segovia, Spain
Toruń, Poland

Anna-Maija Castrén
Vida Česnuitytė
Isabella Crespi
Jacques-Antoine Gauthier
Rita Gouveia
Claude Martin
Almudena Moreno Mínguez
Katarzyna Suwada

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NOTES ON CONTRIBUTORS

Gaëlle Aeby is Research Associate at the University of Geneva and member of the LIVES centre, Switzerland. She has a Ph.D. in Social sciences from the University of Lausanne (2015) and did her post-doctoral research at the University of Manchester (2016–2017). Her fields of specialisation include sociology of family and personal life, socio-anthropology of youth, child protection, life-course perspective.

Catherine Bonvalet is Emeritus Research Director at the French Institute for Demographic Studies (INED) and an Associate Researcher at the Research Unit on Ageing, French National Pension Fund (CNAV), France. She is a specialist in family and housing issues as well as family solidarity and is the author of several books and numerous journal papers.

Diana Carvalho is Research Assistant at ISCTE–University Institute of Lisbon, Centre for Research and Studies in Sociology, Lisbon, Portugal. She is a Ph.D. student in Sociology and has been working in the areas of Sociology of Family, Childhood and Youth Studies. Her current research interests are longitudinal and life-course analysis and youth trajectories and transitions.

Helena Carvalho has a Ph.D. in Sociology, in Theory and Method. Full Professor in the Department of Social Research Methods at ISCTE–University Institute of Lisbon, Portugal. She is Director of the School of Sociology and Public Policy. She coordinates the Postgraduate in Data Analysis in Social Sciences. Senior researcher at CIES-IUL, and expert in methodological issues and quantitative methods for categorical and quantitative variables.

Anna-Maija Castrén is Associate Professor of Sociology at the University of Eastern Finland, in Kuopio, Finland. She has published on adults and children's family understandings, marriage and weddings, post-separation families, and configurational approach. Currently, she is a member of the Executive Board of ESA RN13 Sociology of Families and Intimate Lives.

Vida Česnuitytė is Associate Professor at the Mykolas Romeris University, in Vilnius, Lithuania. Since 2017 is co-coordinator of the ESA RN13 Sociology of Families and Intimate Lives. Research interests include family conceptualisation, formation, and practices, and social research methods. Co-edited books published at Macmillan Palgrave *Families and Personal Networks. An International Comparative Perspective* (2018; with K. Wall, E. D. Widmer, J.-A. Gauthier, and R. Gouveia), and *Family Continuity and Change. Contemporary European Perspectives* (2017; with D. Lück, and E. D. Widmer).

Tom Chevalier is CNRS Researcher at Arènes, Rennes, France. He has a Ph.D. in Political Science (Sciences Po, Paris). He works on public policies targeted at young people in Europe (social policies, education, active labour market policies), and on youth poverty.

Bernardo Coelho is a Sociologist, invited Assistant Professor at the ISCSP-University of Lisbon, Portugal, Researcher and Founding member of Interdisciplinary Center for Gender Studies—CIEG-ISCSP at the University of Lisbon. He teaches sociology of gender, contemporary sociological theory, and methodology. He is co-coordinator of the Portuguese Sociological Association's gender and sexuality research network. He has published several books, articles, and book chapters.

Isabella Crespi is Associate Professor in Family sociology and Cultural sociology at the Department of Education, Cultural Heritage and Tourism, University of Macerata, Italy. She has a Ph.D. in Sociology and she works on family, gender equality, migration. She has been coordinator of the ESA RN13 Sociology of Families and Intimate Lives (2013–2017) and now she is a member of the Advisory Board.

François de Singly is Professor Emeritus at the Université de Paris-La Sorbonne's Faculty of Social Sciences, France. He has two doctoral degrees in sociology (University of Paris VIII; Université de Paris V). He has published more than thirty books and numerous scientific articles and is an editorial advisor. He is a member of the French Prime Minister's High Council of the Family, Childhood and Age.

Anna Dechant is Senior Researcher at the Federal Institute for Population Research (BiB) in Wiesbaden, Germany. Her recent research focuses on family sociology, in particular the division of paid work and care work within couples as well as cultural perspectives in family research.

Vicente Diaz-Gandasegui is Lecturer at the Department of Social Analysis of the Universidad Carlos III de Madrid, Spain. His current research lines are based on family studies, the social change produced by technological development and applied mathematical sociology.

Viorela Ducu is Associate Researcher at the Babeş-Bolyai University, Romania. She has a Ph.D. in Sociology, with an interest in mixed and transnational families, children's rights and qualitative research methods. Her main publications include *Romanian Transnational Families—Gender, Family Practices and Difference*, 2018, (author) at Palgrave Macmillan and *Displaying grandparenting within Romanian transnational families*, in *Global Networks*, 2020.

Ann-Zofie Duvander is Professor of Demography and Sociology at the Stockholm University, and Mid University in Östersund, Sweden. She has worked at the Swedish Social Insurance Agency and the Inspectorate for the Social Insurance. She is one of the coordinators of the International Network for Leave Policies and Research (leavenetwork.org).

Lars Evertsson is Professor in Social Work at the Department of Psychology and Social Work, Mid University, Sweden. He has a Ph.D. in sociology from the Department of Sociology, Umeå University, Sweden. His research interests include family sociology and sociology of the professions.

Lluís Flaquer is Emeritus Professor of Sociology at the Universitat Autònoma de Barcelona, Spain. In 1969, he took a degree in SciencesPo at the IEP in Paris. His main current research specializations are father involvement and shared parenting after separation. In 2018, he was awarded a prize by the Catalan Academy for his contribution to the sociology of the family.

Ionuț Földes is Research Fellow at the Interdisciplinary Centre for Data Science and lecturer at the Faculty of Sociology and Social Work, Babeş-Bolyai University, Cluj-Napoca, Romania. His doctoral research explored the change in intergenerational family ties in the context of mass emigration from Romania towards the West, focusing on the involvement of elderly parents in maintaining family solidarity across borders.

Agnieszka Furmańska-Maruszak is Assistant Professor at the Institute of Sociology, Nicolaus Copernicus University in Toruń, Poland. Her scientific interests are located in the areas of eldercare, labour market, and human resources management. She has worked as a national expert in Eurofound projects. Her research focuses on international comparisons of long-term care regimes and labour market participation of informal carers.

Rémi Gallou socio-demographer, is Researcher at the Research Unit on Ageing, French National Pension Fund (CNAV), France, and Associate Researcher at the French Institute for Demographic Studies (INED). Having researched the ageing of immigrants in France for several years, his current research focuses on questions relating to residential mobility and social inequalities during retirement.

Jacques-Antoine Gauthier holds a Ph.D. in Sociology, and is Senior Lecturer at the University of Lausanne's Life-course and inequality research

centre and member of the LIVES centre, Switzerland. His current research concerns the time-related construction of individual life trajectories and their interdependencies. Currently, he is the coordinator of the ESA RN13 Sociology of Families and Intimate Lives (2019–2021).

Anne H. Gauthier is Director of the Generations and Gender Programme at the Netherlands Interdisciplinary Demographic Institute and Professor of Comparative Family Studies at the University of Groningen, the Netherlands. She holds a Ph.D. in sociology (University of Oxford). Her expertise lies in cross-national research on families including fertility decisions, family policies, parenting, and transition to adulthood.

Rita Gouveia is Post-doc Researcher in Sociology of family and personal life at the Institute of Social Sciences of the University of Lisbon, Portugal. She has a degree in Psychology and a Ph.D. in Sociology of Family, Gender and Youth. She is a member of the Executive Board of the ESA RN13 Sociology of Families and Intimate Lives.

Eva Gulløv is Professor of Educational Anthropology at the Department of Education, University of Aarhus, Denmark, and Professor at the Department of Education, University of Agder, Norway. She has a Ph.D. in social anthropology and has written extensively within the field of childhood studies.

Mihaela Hărăguș is Researcher at the Centre for Population Studies, Babeș-Bolyai University, Cluj-Napoca, Romania. She has Ph.D. in Sociology and she has conducted research on topics such as transition to parenthood, non-standard life-courses, and intergenerational relationships within the family. Her recent research focuses on transnational families and how intergenerational solidarity is reconfigured in migration context.

Linda Hart obtained a Doctorate in sociology (D.Soc.Sc) from the University of Helsinki (Finland) in 2016 with a dissertation combining legal sociology, family sociology, and gender studies. She has worked as a lecturer in social sciences and as a researcher in military sociology. Her ongoing research interests include socio-legal gender studies and sociology of preparedness.

Bettina Isengard is Senior Research Associate at the Department of Sociology at the University of Zurich, Switzerland, and a member of the research group ‘Labour, Generation, Stratification’ (AGES). She has a Ph.D. in Sociology (University of Mannheim). Her current research activities include studies about generations, social structure, and inequality.

Jeroen Janssen is Ph.D. student at the Department of Social work and Social pedagogy of Ghent University, Belgium. His research is on the relations between families and childcare provision in contexts of diversity. He studies inequalities in search processes and the concept of choice.

Irena Emilija Juozeliūnienė is Professor of Sociology at the Vilnius University, Lithuania. She has research interests in visual family research methods,

transnational family practices and identities. Her publications include the books *Mapping Methods in Image-Based Research* (2014), *Family Change in Times of the De-Bordering of Europe and Global Mobility* (2015; co-editing with J. Seymour), *Making Lithuanian Families Across Borders: Conceptual Frames and Empirical Evidence* (2020; co-editing with J. Seymour).

Ronny König is Senior Research Assistant at the Department of Sociology at the University of Zurich, Switzerland, and a member of the research group ‘LABour, Generation, Stratification’ (AGES). He has Ph.D. in Sociology (University of Zurich). His main research interests are social inequality, stratification, and intergenerational relationships. Currently, he is a member of the Executive Board of ESA RN13 Sociology of Families and Intimate Lives.

Irena E. Kotowska Professor Emerita of Demography at the Institute of Statistics and Demography, the Warsaw School of Economics, Poland, and the country-level coordinator of the Generations and Gender Programme (GGP). Main fields of research interest include: fertility, family, gender, and the labour market; population ageing; population and economy; population-related policy, family policy.

Dafina Kurti Sinatra is doing a Ph.D. at the University of Cologne, Germany. She has been researcher at the GESIS—Leibniz Institute for the Social Sciences working for diverse EU-data infrastructure projects. Her research fields combine migration studies, social inequality, and sibling research.

Dagmar Kutsar is Associate Professor in social policy at the Institute of Social Studies, University of Tartu, Estonia. She has been an Executive Board member of ESA (2003–2007) and the Chair of the National Organisations (2007–2009).

Judith Lind is Senior Lecturer in Child Studies at the Department of Thematic Studies, Linköping University, Sweden. She is one of the editors of the book *Doing Good Parenthood: Ideals and Practices of Parental Involvement* (Palgrave) and is involved in several research projects on adoption, assisted reproduction and foster care.

Detlev Lück is Senior Researcher at the Federal Institute for Population Research in Wiesbaden, Germany, and project coordinator of the panel study FReDA. He is a former Coordinator of the ESA RN13 Sociology of Families and Intimate Lives (2017–2019) and currently is a member of the Advisory Board. His recent research focuses on cultural perspectives in family research.

Diana Maciel is Assistant Professor at ISCSP of the University of Lisbon, Portugal, and is on the scientific board of Interdisciplinary Centre for Gender Studies—CIEG. She is finishing her Ph.D. on gender at the individual level: agency, resources, opportunities, and constraints. She has co-authored 7

books, 7 book chapters, and 1 peer-reviewed paper and presented 71 papers in international and national conferences.

Jan Macvarish Sociologist, Visiting Research Fellow at the Centre for Parenting Culture Studies—CPCS, University of Kent, Canterbury UK. She is co-author of *Parenting Culture Studies* (Palgrave Macmillan, 2014) and author of *Neuroparenting: The Expert Invasion of Family Life* (Palgrave Macmillan, 2016).

Bella Marckmann is Senior Adviser at the Danish Evaluation Institute. She has a Ph.D. in Sociology from the University of Copenhagen and did the research in this book as part of a post-doc project entitled ‘The Moral Economy of Families’ funded by the Danish Council for Independent Research. Member of the editorial board of the journal *Dansk Sociologi*.

Claude Martin Sociologist, Research Professor at the CNRS (National centre for scientific research), University of Rennes (Arènes-UMR 6051), France; chair CNAF ‘Childhood, well-being and parenting’ at EHESP school of public health. He published extensively on family, parenting, childhood, childcare, and long-term care policies and more broadly on social policies and welfare states transformations. Currently, he is a member of the French Prime Minister’s High Council of the Family, Childhood and Age and member of the Advisory Board of the ESA RN13 Sociology of Families and Intimate Lives.

Gerardo Meil is Full Professor in Sociology at the Universidad Autónoma of Madrid, Spain. His research fields focus on Family Sociology and Social Policies. Former President of the European Society on Family Relations, member of the International Network on Leave Policies and Research, and of the Advisory Board of the ESA RN13 Sociology of Families and Intimate Lives.

Almudena Moreno Mínguez has a Ph.D. in Sociology from the Universidad Autónoma de Barcelona in 2004. She is a professor in Sociology at the University of Valladolid, Spain. She is a specialist in family issues, welfare state, public policy and comparative research on gender. She has over a hundred publications in the form of articles, books, and book chapters. Currently, she is a member of the Advisory Board of the ESA RN13 Sociology of Families and Intimate Lives.

Monika Mynarska is Associate Professor at the Institute of Psychology, Cardinal Stefan Wyszyński University in Warsaw, Poland. She has a Ph.D. in social demography (University of Rostock, Germany). Her research interests cover family and fertility choices in life-course perspective.

Oliver Nahkur is Research Fellow in social well-being studies at the Institute of Social Studies, University of Tartu, Estonia.

Lena Näre (D.Phil., Ph.D., Docent) is tenure-track Associate Professor of Sociology at the University of Helsinki, Finland. Her research interests include

the study of migration and asylum, work and employment, care and transnationalism, intersectionality and ethnographic methods. She served as the Vice-President of European Sociological Association in 2017–2019. She is the editor-in-chief of the *Nordic Journal of Migration Research*.

Magda Nico is a Sociologist. She is a Researcher at the Centre for Research and Studies in Sociology (CIES-ISCTE) and Assistant Professor at the Department of Social Research Methods at ISCTE-University Institute of Lisbon, Portugal. She is interested in life-course theory and methods, sociology of family, the linked and inter-personal relationships, and in the social mobility and trajectories of (young) people.

Charlott Nyman is Associate Professor in Sociology at the Department of Sociology, Umeå University, Sweden. Her research interests include family and couple relationships, with a special focus on money and finances in couples.

Jim Ogg is a Sociologist who specialises in the field of ageing. He is Associate Researcher at the Research Unit on Ageing, French National Pension Fund, and Honorary Visiting Research Fellow, Swansea University. He is editor-in-chief of the journal *Retraite et Société* since 2015.

Jesús Rogero-García is Lecturer in Sociology at the Faculty of Economics, Universidad Autónoma of Madrid, Spain. His research fields focus on Sociology of education and Sociology of the family.

Pedro Romero-Balsas holds a Ph.D. in Sociology, and is Lecturer at the Department of Sociology, Universidad Autónoma de Madrid, Spain. His research interests include work and family balance, gender, public policies, parenthood, and job mobility. He has been visiting researcher fellow at University College London, at the Federal Institute for Population Research (Germany) and at NTNU (Norway). He is a member of the Executive Board of ESA RN13 Sociology of Families and Intimate Lives.

Kerstin Ruckdeschel is a Senior Researcher at the Federal Institute for Population Research (BiB) in Wiesbaden, Germany. Her research focuses on family sociology, particular concepts of family and fertility intentions, and family demography.

Elisabetta Ruspini is Associate Professor of Sociology at the University of Milano-Bicocca, Italy. She is the Director of ABCD-Interdepartmental Center for Gender Studies, University of Milano-Bicocca, and the co-coordinator of the ESA RN33 Women's and Gender Studies. Between 2012 and 2018 she was the coordinator of the Research Committee Gender Studies, part of AIS-Associazione Italiana di Sociologia (Italian Sociological Association).

Inga Sabanova has a Ph.D. in Sociology (Trinity College Dublin, Ireland). Her research explores migrant parenting with a specific focus on ethnicity, gender, and social class.

Steven Saxonberg is Professor at the Institute of European Studies and International Relations at the Faculty of Social and Economic Sciences at the Comenius University in Slovakia, and at the Department of Social Policy and Social Work at the Masaryk University in the Czech Republic. The research was co-funded by the Erasmus+ Programme of the European Union, project number 611572-EPP-1-201 9-1-SK-EPPJ MO-CHAIR.

Norbert F. Schneider is Professor of Sociology and Director of the Federal Institute for Population Research in Wiesbaden, Germany. He teaches as an Honorary Professor at the Universities of Frankfurt/Main and Vienna. Currently, he is the Vice-President of the German Society for Demography (DGD). His research focuses on social demography, family sociology, and migration studies.

Maria Silva is an integrated Researcher at the ISCTE–University Institute of Lisbon, Centre for Research and Studies in Sociology, Lisbon, Portugal. She has a Ph.D. in Sociology of Education (University of São Paulo/Brasil) and has been working in the areas of Sociology of Family, Sociology of Education and Political Socialization. Her current research interests are families, life-course, and political socialisation.

Katarzyna Suwada is Assistant Professor at the Institute of Sociology, Nicolaus Copernicus University in Toruń, Poland. Her research interests include fatherhood, motherhood, gender inequalities in family life, family policy. She is an author of *Parenting and Work in Poland. A Gender Studies Perspective* (Springer 2021). She is a member of the Executive Board of the ESA RN13 Sociology of Families and Intimate Lives.

Ryszard Szarfenberg is Associate Professor in political sciences at the Faculty of Political Sciences and International Studies, University of Warsaw, Poland. He has a Ph.D. in political sciences and specialises in social policy and poverty. He is a member of the EU Inclusion Strategies Group, European Anti-Poverty Network, and an expert of the European Social Policy Network.

Dorota Szelewa is Assistant Professor at the School of Social Policy, Social Work and Social Justice, University College Dublin in Ireland, and an Editor in Chief of Journal of Family Studies. Her research interests are interdisciplinary and include the issues of social policy transformation in post-communist countries, gender studies, reproductive rights, migration, theories of institutional evolution, public administration and public management, and the problems of Europeanisation.

Marc Szydlik has been a Full Professor of Sociology at the University of Zurich since 2004, Switzerland. He previously worked at the German Institute for Economic Research, the Max-Planck-Institute for Human Development, the Free University of Berlin and the University of Erfurt. Currently, Szydlik directs the research group ‘LAbour, Generation, Stratification’.

Anália Torres holds a Ph.D. in Sociology and is currently a Full Professor at the Institute of Social and Political Sciences, University of Lisbon, Portugal, where she coordinates the Sociology Department. She is the founder and coordinator of the Interdisciplinary Centre for Gender Studies. She is former President of the ESA, and President of the Portuguese Association of Sociology. She has published 29 books, 50 book chapters, and 31 articles.

Wim Van Lancker is Assistant Professor in Social Work and Social Policy affiliated with the Centre for Sociological Research (CESO) at the University of Leuven, Belgium. His research is focused on family policy (childcare, parental leave, and child benefits) and its social distribution, poverty and social inequality, the design and effectiveness of social policy measures, and the effectiveness of social work interventions. He co-edited the *Palgrave Handbook of Family Policy*.

Michel Vandebroek is Associate Professor and Head of the Department of Social work and Social pedagogy of Ghent University, Belgium. His main research is in early childhood care and education with a special interest in processes of in- and exclusion in the context of diversity. He is coordinating editor (with Liselott Olsson) of the Routledge book series ‘Contesting early Childhood’.

Eric D. Widmer holds a Ph.D. in Sociology (1995, University of Geneva), and is Professor at the Department of Sociology of the University of Geneva, and a member of the board of directors of NCCR LIVES, Switzerland. His long-term interests include intimate ties, family and other inter-personal relations, life-course research and social networks. Eric D. Widmer has developed an approach to families as configurations of interdependencies, always on the move in the life-course (the book *Family Configurations. A Structural Approach to Family Diversity*, 2016). Professor has been conducting over the years a series of empirical research on couples, siblings, blended families, mobile families, etc. He is a member of the Advisory Board of ESA RN13 Sociology of Families and Intimate Lives.

Ida Wentzel Winther is Associate Professor of Educational Anthropology at the Department of Education, University of Aarhus, Denmark. She has a Ph.D. in educational anthropology. Winther has written extensively within the field of everyday life, family and home studies. She works both theoretically, practically and methodologically within the field of visual anthropology and cultural phenomenology.

Laura Zanfrini holds a Ph.D. in Sociology, and is Full Professor at the Fondazione ISMU, Milan, Italy, where she teaches ‘Sociology of Migrations and Interethnic Relations’, and ‘Organizations, Environment and Social Innovation’. She is the Director of the research center WWELL (Work, Welfare, Enterprise, Lifelong-Learning). She is a member of several editorial boards, scientific networks, and consultative bodies and author of about 400 publications.

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Introduction

*Isabella Crespi, Vida Česnuitytė, Katarzyna Suwada,
Anna-Maija Castrén, Claude Martin, Jacques-Antoine Gauthier,
Rita Gouveia, and Almudena Moreno Mínguez*

In the first decades of the twenty-first century, family life in Europe has faced multiple challenges prompted by economic, political, cultural, and technological developments. The changes are continuous. As a field of research, family sociology identifies and analyses family phenomena in order to better understand the social realities that people live in and seeks to propose effective solutions to problems encountered in societies. New questions and research topics are constantly emerging and novel approaches and methodologies are

I. Crespi (✉)

Department of Education, Cultural Heritage and Tourism, University of Macerata,
Macerata, Italy

e-mail: isabella.crespi@unimc.it

V. Česnuitytė

Mykolas Romeris University, Vilnius, Lithuania

e-mail: v.cesnuityte@mruni.eu

K. Suwada

Institute of Sociology, Nicolaus Copernicus University, Toruń, Poland

e-mail: k.suwada@umk.pl

A.-M. Castrén

Department of Social Sciences, University of Eastern Finland, Kuopio, Finland

e-mail: anna-maija.castren@uef.fi

C. Martin

EHESP, CNRS (National Centre of Scientific Rese), Rennes Cedex, France

e-mail: claude.martin@ehesp.fr; claude.martin@cnrs.fr

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needed to address these topics. In this respect, family sociology is a dynamic sector of research that encourages the continuous revision of its theories and research instruments, in particular by establishing connections with other fields of research in social sciences (such as work and employment, inequalities and poverty, welfare state analysis, housing and education).

However, the majority of European family scholars are still predominantly experts on their own societies and may only have a vague perception of the state of the art and debates in other societies. The reason for this limitation is not language barriers per se; rather, it is specifically the lack of European publications in English (monographs, handbooks, journals, etc.) on contemporary research that would offer an overview and access to the variety of theoretical and methodological approaches being used, as well as to the cutting-edge research being conducted across the continent. Instead, European scholars are compelled to draw from and refer to American works, meaning that the research trends, theoretical and methodological approaches outside Europe tend to dominate, particularly in studies published in English.

The aim of *The Palgrave Handbook of Family Sociology in Europe* is to provide an overview of topical themes and current developments in family sociology in order to better understand family life in contemporary European societies. The handbook covers several ‘hot topics’ and introduces readers to the empirical realities of family life in Western, Southern, Northern, and Eastern Europe. The contributors were encouraged to provide cutting-edge research findings and to contextualise the national, political, and cultural trends in family and intimate lives in the wider European and sociological frame of reference. The analyses included in the handbook mostly move beyond a single society and offer a comprehensive understanding of the state of the art of the topic discussed. However, and perhaps unconventionally, original empirical case analyses are also included in order to offer an in-depth understanding of some of the micro-level dynamics of contemporary family life.

The handbook comprises six parts, each of them containing four to six chapters: Researching families and intimate lives in Europe: theoretical and methodological trends; Welfare state and family policy regimes in Europe; Families as relationships; Parental arrangements, parenting and child

J.-A. Gauthier
University of Lausanne, Lausanne, Switzerland
e-mail: Jacques-Antoine.Gauthier@unil.ch

R. Gouveia
Institute of Social Sciences, University of Lisbon, Lisbon, Portugal
e-mail: rita.gouveia@ics.ul.pt

A. Moreno Mínguez
Campus María Zambrano, University of Valladolid, Segovia, Spain
e-mail: almudena@soc.uva.esu

well-being; Family lives in migration: intergenerational and transnational relationships; and Family trajectories: (un)linking lives over time and place.

TRENDS IN RESEARCHING FAMILIES AND INTIMATE LIVES IN EUROPE

Throughout Europe, we have witnessed changes in the ways that individuals think, live, and build their families and intimate relationships, while some other aspects remain quite stable. Although European societies have followed quite converging pathways of change, family lives and practices are shaped by the socio-historical backgrounds, economical contexts and legal frameworks, as well as the gender norms, social inequalities, and life course dynamics characteristic of each society. In such a multi-layered context, the evolution of theories and methodologies of family sociology is deeply intertwined with the social, cultural, and demographic trends that affect individuals and families. The first part of the handbook ‘Researching families and intimate lives in Europe: theoretical and methodological trends’ offers insights into how theories and methodologies have developed to encompass family changes and diversity. Part I starts with François de Singly’s critical reconstruction of the history of family sociology in Europe (Chapter 2) taking Durkheim’s first university course in the field from 1888–1889 as its point of departure. Drawing on Elias’ notion of a ‘society of individuals’ (2001), the author argues that families have been transitioning from a focus on the ‘we-identity’ to greater emphasis being placed on the ‘I-identity’, whereby individuals continuously struggle to balance cohesion and autonomy. Moreover, this ‘we-I’ balance is strongly shaped by gender and social structures.

Gender, social inequality, and life course are the three cornerstones of the next chapter (Chapter 3), authored by Bernardo Coelho, Diana Maciel, and Anália Torres. From a cross-national perspective, this chapter focuses on how family and gender relations develop over the life course and in accordance with an individual’s unequal structural positions and participation in the labour market. This comparative analysis draws on the various statistical indicators associated with the timing of leaving the parental home, working hours, models of conjugal division of paid and unpaid work, as well as income.

Another key domain in understanding continuity and change in family relations is the law. By providing empirical examples of the European Court of Human Rights, Linda Hart shows (in Chapter 4) how political and legal changes in different national contexts contribute to the recognition of family, gender, and sexual diversity, but also how they legitimate certain kinship categories and principles that do not always overlap with affinity-based relationships and the lived experience. The intersection between family relations and law may be studied in many different contexts and new legislation may engender new forms of family relations.

Detlev Lück, Kerstin Ruckdeschel, Anna Dechant, and Norbert F. Schneider (in Chapter 5) provide a general landscape of the main family demographic trends in Europe before and after 1965, the periods referred to as *the First* and *the Second Demographic Transition*. The authors highlight common pathways of change, as well as features that have remained quite stable over the last century, by discussing structural and cultural factors such as the value change from materialism to post-materialism that was responsible for engendering both stability and transformation.

Finally, two innovative methodological chapters in Part I illustrate how family diversity and complexity demand the development of creative and sophisticated methodologies and instruments, allowing for more inclusive definitions of family that are closer to the individuals' subjective meanings. Eric D. Widmer (Chapter 6) introduces the configurational approach as a methodological perspective that conceptualises families and intimate ties as configurations of mutually dependent people rather than prescribed groups based on blood, marriage, and co-residency criteria. The author shows the heuristic potential of adopting social network techniques and the study of social dilemmas. Meanwhile, Irena E. Juozeliūnienė (in Chapter 7) discusses the pros and cons of using visual methods to research families and intimate lives. The author highlights the power of images; working with images has become a standard practice for many family researchers and involves the extensive use of photographs, video recordings, drawings, family albums, egocentric maps, etc., as well as the adoption of mixed methods.

WELFARE STATE AND FAMILY POLICY REGIMES IN EUROPE

European family life is heavily impacted by the institutional context, in particular, the family policy system. As Emanuel Ferragina and Martin Seeleib-Kaiser argue, family policy can 'have a multiplicity of functions: horizontal redistribution, the enhancement of individual choices, increasing fertility, supporting economic growth and productivity, as well as reducing gender inequalities' (Ferragina and Seeleib-Kaiser 2015, 2). Thus, Part II, 'Welfare State and Family Policy Regimes in Europe', describes the relationships between the welfare state and family in different European contexts.

Irena Kotowska, Monika Mynarska, and Anne Gauthier (in Chapter 8) discuss the issue of the persistent below-replacement fertility in European countries and potential future developments in family policies that need to consider the new diversity of family structures and gender roles. Changing gender roles are actually a key issue for policymakers today. Thus, Steven Saxonberg and Dorota Szelewa (Chapter 9) propose to examine family policies in different European countries using the conceptual axis of genderisation-degenderisation. They argue that even though there is a general trend in Europe towards increased degenderisation, most countries are still characterised by policies that reproduce traditional gender roles.

The reproduction of traditional gender roles in family is closely connected to the organisation of care for children and the elderly, as well as the way in which people reconcile their care obligations with paid work. This issue is discussed by Agnieszka Furmańska-Maruszak and Katarzyna Suwada (in Chapter 10), who analyse the support of family policy systems in The Netherlands, Poland, Portugal, and Sweden by using the concept of familialisation. They argue that despite there being different instruments that aim to support the family in providing care to its members, the family is still perceived as being the main provider of care. Elisabetta Ruspini and Ann-Zofie Duvander (Chapter 11) focus on parental leave as a policy instrument in two clusters of countries—the Nordic and the Southern European countries. They seek to identify which groups of parents benefit from parental leave systems in these two clusters of countries. Chapters 10 and 11 both discuss the role of family policy in supporting economic growth and productivity, as they focus on the issue of combining paid work with other family obligations. They also show the kind of role that family policy can play in enhancing or/and reducing individual choices in family life and paid work.

Finally, Chapter 12 addresses the issue of families living in poverty. Ryszard Szarfenberg shows how different social policy interventions can reduce poverty in European families.

FAMILIES AS RELATIONSHIPS

Research that draws on the individuals' personal meaning-making, practices and interactions, as well as the inherent materiality and spatial aspects, is a vast field in present-day Europe. Much of this research is qualitative and small scale, making generalisations difficult. However, as highlighted by Carol Smart (2007), the incorporation of the meanings that people themselves ascribe to their relationships allows researchers to include the complex, contradictory, and changing reasons why people behave like they do in family life. The chapters in Part III 'Families as relationships' explore families as constellations of 'lived relations' and highlight aspects that are central to building and maintaining familial relationships. The authors discuss European families as comprising relationships in which there may be many different kinds of 'glue' that bind people and which may incorporate various dynamics that draw on emotions, feelings of intimacy and love, biogenetic relatedness and descent, cultural ideals and social norms, as well as on the social structures and hierarchies that are prevalent in our societies.

First, Rita Gouveia and Anna-Majja Castrén (Chapter 13) identify some of the key debates that have influenced contemporary understandings of families as relationships since the 1980s. The debates have highlighted everyday relatedness, feelings, and practices of closeness that may or may not overlap with the normative expectations of family and kinship. In Chapter 14, Lars Evertsson and Charlott Nyman offer a comprehensive review of couple relationships from the perspective of money and finances. Their focus is on how

couples organise and share money, finances and consumption, and the consequences of the different ways of handling money. For couples, money is ‘Janus-faced’: on the one hand, it elicits gendered expectations and power imbalances, but, on the other hand, the ways in which money is shared, merged, or held separate inform us of the role it plays as an expression of commitment and love. The study of money gives insight into what being in a couple relationship means, and how partners balance between being separate individuals and forming a familial unit. Next, Eva Gulløv and Ida Wentzel Winther (Chapter 15) adopt a children’s perspective in studying sibling relationships. The authors focus on everyday situations, such as sharing objects, commuting between households, carrying out chores, and spending leisure time together. The everyday doings of siblingship evoke feelings of togetherness, relatedness and longing, as well as obligation, doubt and frustration, all of which reflect the tensions between the ideals and the realities of family life. The chapter highlights the processual nature of relationships, drawing on the particularities of contemporary family life.

The final chapter, Chapter 16, discusses the relationships between parents and their adult children. While parenting small children is a widely researched and fervently debated topic, social expectations towards the parents of adult children have thus far been studied much less. This is surprising when taking into account, for example, the negative effects of the economic crises of recent decades on the attempts by young adults to transition to the work market and become financially independent. Author Bella Marckmann draws on an in-depth empirical study into parent-adult children relationships characterised by a continuous search for a balance between closeness and distance, between too much and too little.

PARENTAL ARRANGEMENTS, PARENTING, AND CHILD WELL-BEING

Part IV, ‘Parental arrangements, parenting and child well-being’, covers some of the main research developments related to parents and children in recent decades. These developments concern parenting roles, the division of labour in childcare arrangements between parents themselves and between parents and the complex network of non-parental services, along with the impact of these developments on child well-being. Although it is parents who are still primarily responsible for providing childcare, the development of the Early Childhood Education and Care (ECEC) sector has led to a great amount of research, often comparative research, being conducted. New childcare arrangements raise questions about quality and equal access to non-parental childcare, while also inspiring theoretical and empirical developments concerning specific parental (maternal and paternal) practices, or the ways in which parents assume their role, highlighted by the recent concept of parenting.

The first two chapters concern non-parental childcare. Gerardo Meil, Vicente Díaz Gandasegui, Jesús Rogero-García, and Pedro Romero-Balsas

(Chapter 17) propose a comparison between three quite typical national configurations that exist in Norway, France, and Spain. These countries represent different kinds of non-parental care strategies. As the analysis reveals, there is a relative convergence towards ‘de-familialisation’, while a significant impact of household income on the types of non-parental care can be observed in France and Spain. Michel Vandebroek, Wim Van Lancker, and Jeroen Janssen (Chapter 18) move beyond the usual observation that participating in ECEC services is very beneficial to children’s cognitive and non-cognitive outcomes. They argue that poor families tend to have less access to ECEC services than higher-income families. Moreover, even if children from disadvantaged families do have access to ECEC services, such services are often of poorer quality. The authors document inequalities in childhood and examine how these inequalities affect the nature of parenthood and parenting.

Lluís Flaquer (Chapter 19) focuses on a major issue concerning the shared parenting arrangements after separation and divorce, which have generated many new regulations and experiments throughout Europe. The main thesis presented by the author is based on an idea that joint parental custody (JPC) should be considered in relation to the progress of gender equality. The chapter explores the availability of comparable quantitative data on the prevalence of JPC and gender equality with the aim of presenting the main differences between countries in the context of the Second Demographic Transition.

Much of the development in parental and parenting issues has a common objective, i.e. guaranteeing child well-being. This reference to child well-being is at the core of much of the research that has been undertaken in recent decades. Dagmar Kutsar and Oliver Nahkur (Chapter 20) present a comparative analysis of subjective child well-being in the context of family change in Estonia, Poland, and Romania using data from the second wave of the International Study of Children’s Well-Being, ‘Children’s Worlds’ (ISCWeB). The overall findings confirm that children’s satisfaction with family life increases their subjective well-being regardless of the type of home or form of family in which they live. This innovative study employs the perspective and voice of children in order to enhance knowledge of the factors that contribute to improving the lives of children and their families. In order to guarantee the well-being of the child, many policies address the assessment of parental potential and capacities. Examining aspiring parents (through adoption, foster care, or assisted reproduction using donor gametes), Judith Lind (Chapter 21) analyses the evaluation criteria used for assessing parenting capacity to determine whether aspiring parents are capable of caring for a child. The author analyses how the consideration of socio-economic factors is justified in the assessment guidelines.

The neologisms ‘parenting’ or ‘parentalité’ are a success story in the fields of both research and family policy. Jan Macvarish and Claude Martin (in Chapter 22) outline the ways in which ‘parenting’ is primarily discussed as a problem of public and private disorder, and then consider how ‘parenting’

reconceptualises the role and status of parents. The authors argue that the emergence of these neologisms to describe family relations and the raising of children, as well as the adoption of these terms by policymakers, suggest the development of a new nexus through which families are understood.

FAMILY LIVES IN MASS MIGRATION CONTEXT

Part V ‘Family lives in migration: intergenerational and transnational relationships’ documents another crucial challenge for research on family: migration and its impacts. Migration is a globally growing phenomenon and international research confirms the centrality of the family in the migration plans and strategies of individuals (Attias-Donfut and Cook 2017; Crespi et al. 2018), for example, in decisions to emigrate and which family members will emigrate. The migrant family finds itself in a social system in which roles and relationships may be partially or completely different to what it has been used to and in which family relationships can act as bridges between migrants, their country of origin and their new context, as well as create a network of closed relationships in self-referential and poorly integrated communities (Kraler et al. 2010). In this process, the migrant family plays a key role in terms of time and space (Mazzucato 2013; Zontini and Reynolds 2018; Baldassar and Merla 2013) and transnational and mixed families (Bryceson and Vuorela 2002) can be framed in the perspective of migrating families. Finally, the extent to which migrants and their families are integrated into society, welfare systems, and their political participation reveals the level of openness of society to change and innovation, challenging the ideal of equality and inclusion that has formed part of the creation of modern Western states.

In Chapter 23, Laura Zanfrini considers the presence of migrant families and of people from migrant backgrounds. According to the author, migrant families are a key issue in contemporary Europe and a crucial question as far as the sustainability of the European social model and the future of the European way of life are concerned. Beyond their demographic importance, migrant families are radically challenging European education systems, labour markets, and welfare regimes, since they are largely concentrated in the lower ranks of social stratification and are overrepresented in all categories at risk of exclusion.

Dafina Kurti Sinatra and Inga Sabanova (Chapter 24) provide an overview of recent research in the field of family and migration in Europe, particularly focusing on multicultural and transnational families and their role in migration processes. Greater emphasis is placed on the role of the transmission of family values and traditions to younger generations facing specific economic circumstances and challenges, as well as to the role of national migration and integration policies and regulation in the dynamics of transnational families.

Families whose members have experienced migration face challenges in intergenerational relations, as explained by Mihaela Hărăguș, Viorela Ducu, and Ionuț Földes (Chapter 25). Using various theoretical perspectives and