

Review 3

Title: 'Family, Ties, and Care. Family Transformation in a Plural Modernity'. By Hans Bertram and Nancy Ehlert (eds.). Opladen: Barbara Budrich Publishers, 2012.

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For a change, I began reading from the end - what else can one do with a 650 page tome? In the index, I find: "Utility of Children"; "Sexual morality"; "Pleasure marriages"... Very interesting!

Then a very useful *Glossary*, especially as regards "Pleasure marriages", which turn out to be not at all what one might imagine! The term refers to a form of Islamic marriage that differs from the conventionally registered marriage, in that "most couples of this type do not live together, instead they meet occasionally to act out their sexuality" (p. 571). For a Western reader unfamiliar with these varieties of Islam but imbued with all sorts of preconceived notions about that religion, Hoda Salah's article is an extraordinary eye-opener.

The Table of contents shows that the book is indeed about all sorts of situations, among which several contribute information rarely found elsewhere, that concern family forms and behaviours, care and attachments in different parts of the world.

I thought of my little cousin working with Oxfam in Moscow and decided this was exactly the sort of book that would be useful for her. And that is the angle under which I will write about it.

The volume of more than 650 pages was written by 47 authors, is divided into 36 chapters i.e. seven sections and a conclusion. After an Introduction ("The Plural Modernity") by editor Hans Bertram, and two theoretical sections (I. "The Retreat from the Male Breadwinner Family in Industrial Societies" and II. "Challenges for Development of Attachments and Care"), the other sections cover large geographic areas: Views from Europe, from Japan, China, Africa and the Middle East.

The book can well be considered to be an encyclopaedic handbook on family and social change which not only retraces the historical development of existing family and care-giving models but above all introduces and analyses the changes that have intervened since the post-WWII era.

The daunting challenge of painting a comprehensive picture of how caring for children and the elderly has evolved through time and space has been very successfully met by editors Hans Bertram and Nancy Ehlert, in several ways:

- By re-publishing seminal texts which are thus made available to a large readership (e.g., Gornick & Meyers on the *Earner-Caregiver Model*, Gillis on the

Marginalization of fatherhood in Western countries, Moen, Kelly & Magennis on *Gender Strategies*, Parreñas on *the International Division of Reproductive Labor*, Hochschild on *Love and Gold*, Noddings on *Developing Social Policy* and Hrdy on *Cooperative Breeding and the Paradox of Facultative Fathering*);

- By presenting original empirical, ethnographic, demographic and sociological research on specific situations across the globe, and
- By discussing (in both Bertram's introduction and conclusion) the continuities and transformations observed with relation to the model, based on the American family life-style of the 1950s as put forth by William Goode in his 1963 *World Revolution and Family patterns*, long thought to be the pattern universally applied across the world. As Hans Bertram now points out, "the shape of care for children and for their aging parents in Europe in the future will not develop only on the basis of European traditions. To the contrary, we can assume that the intercultural experiences and reinterpretations of contexts will also change the cultural model in Europe itself." (p. 18)

Bertram's conclusion "Perspectives for a Future-Oriented Family Policy", based on the foregoing chapters, should guide the shaping of a family policy concept. In the first place "that a family policy with the goal of improving care for children and the elderly [should] use well-being as the standard for its actions." (p. 613). On this point, the author reminds us that the U.N. Convention on the Rights of the Child (1989) stressed a criterion too rarely highlighted (to my knowledge) and which would deserve to be more often put forward: that "each child needs a minimum of one person who is 'crazy about the child'..." (p. 616). A fitting observation for this excellent book on love, care and the family.

Family, Ties, and Care radically transforms our vision and understanding of what is going on in our private lives both collectively and individually and sharpens our awareness that care is, in every society and for all populations, a fundamental activity "equivalent to economic development and professional work" (p. 645). It follows, logically and necessarily, that it be given the corresponding social and political importance it deserves for it is a crucial stake for our futures. The book is mandatory reading for professors as well as students of the social sciences and specialists in all fields of family studies.

Conference section

Announced conferences in 2014

May 22-26, 2014

International Communications Association's (ICA) 64th Annual Conference on "Communications and 'the Good Life'" (Seattle, USA). Submission deadline closed.

July 4-7, 2014

International Society for Political Psychology (ISPP) Annual Meeting "Ideologies and Ideological Conflict: The Political Psychology of Belief Systems." (Rome, Italy). Submission deadline closed.

July 8-13, 2014

The International Association of Applied Psychology's (IAAP) 28th International Conference of Applied Psychology (Paris, France). Submissions deadline: March 15, 2014.

July 13-19, 2014

XVIII ISA World Congress of Sociology Facing an Unequal World: Challenges for Global Sociology (Yokohama, Japan). Submission deadline closed.

July 19-24, 2014

IPSA's XXIII World Congress of Political Science (Montreal, Canada). Submission deadline: October 7, 2013. For more information:
<http://www.ipsa.org/events/congress/montreal2014/theme>.

September 3-6, 2014

European Consortium for Political Research (ECPR) 8th General Conference at the University of Glasgow (Glasgow, Scotland). Submission deadline: February 15, 2014.

September 11-13, 2014

IPSA's RC21-29 International Expert Conference on Social and Political Movements, Leaders, Education and Communication. Challenges and Expectations in the Age of Globalization (Lublin, Poland). Submission deadline: March 15, 2014. (See www.politicalsocialization.org for more information)

November 12-15, 2014

ECREA's 5th European Communication Conference. Lusofona University, Lisbon Conference Centre (Lisbon, Portugal). More information soon.