

Editorial on the special issue "Family Values and Family Norms. What Impact Does Culture Have on Familial and Generative Behaviour?"

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In a survey on "Where does family research stand?" *Hartmann Tyrell* (2006) expresses two impressions. The first: "In recent decades, [rational choice theory] has become the dominating theory of orientation within German family sociology" (*Tyrell* 2006: 142, all direct quotations have been translated from German into English by CPoS). The second: "The hegemony of rational choice theory [is] not good for family sociology" (*Tyrell* 2006: 142). This special issue aims to contribute to rectifying this drawback or to clarifying whether it truly is a drawback. Preliminary, some reflections shall be made here, on the current situation of the theoretical landscape in family research, on the contribution of the various theoretical approaches as well as on the conceptualisation of cultural-normative approaches; afterwards the empirical articles are presented.

It is true that in the past two decades much use has been made of quantitative microdata and benefits-oriented action theories to explain familial and most of all generative behaviour, as in many sociological (sub-)disciplines. Strictly speaking, this is less a hegemony of rational choice approaches in general (for an overview cf. *Hill/Kopp* 2006: 102-146), which (as shown in the following) are based in part on quite complex actor models, but, in very concrete terms, of economic explanatory approaches such as the human capital approach and new household economics (*Becker* 1993). There are multiple reasons for this. One is the rapidly growing availability of survey data and of powerful computers and statistical software for their analysis. This also logically has led empirical social research to shift more to quantitative microanalyses. These analyses are theory-led, for which economic theoretical approaches lend themselves in particular. For one, comparatively distinct projections can be derived from economic theories, which facilitate the formation of hypotheses. In addition, these usually argue using "hard facts," which can be easily ascertained using standardised measuring instruments.

Yet the interest in economic theories has also grown for reasons of theoretical and content nature. After all, the individualisation thesis of *Beck* and *Beck-Gernsheim* (1993, 1994) proclaims liberation of individuals in the late modern age from traditional constraints and greater personal responsibility for shaping their own biographies. Rather than prefabricated "normal biographies," today we live personally designed "self-made biographies." If we pursue this thesis, we must presume that

since the 1970s, rationally balancing individual costs and benefits has truly become a (more) important way of explaining biographical events (*Schimank* 2007: 165-166). Against this background, rational choice approaches appear timely.

Ultimately, even empirical findings provide arguments in favour of the turn to economic approaches in the late 20th century, particularly in family research. The drastic drop in fertility in the late 1960s and early 1970s, for example, can be relatively simply and plausibly explained with increased opportunity costs of motherhood. So, why shouldn't we explain familial and generative behaviour by means of benefits-oriented action theories?

In recent years the economic paradigm has come – at least a bit – under pressure because it encountered empirical contradictions. In spite of some approximation tendencies, the patriarchal-complementary division of work between the sexes in relationships, for example, has remained inexplicably stable if one considers that women today have the same educational levels as men (*Wengler et al.* 2009; *Beck-Domzalska* 2007). It even re-traditionalises in the course of a relationship, in particular in the course of family formation (*Huinink/Reichart* 2008; *Schulz/Blossfeld* 2010). This cannot be explained through opportunity costs alone. As for the relationship between human capital and fertility, apparently the same economic rules do not apply for the decisions of women and men. While a high educational level lowers the probability of a woman becoming a mother, it raises the probability of a man to become a father (*Schmitt/Winkelmann* 2005: 8-11). The theory also encounters contradictions in an international comparison. For example, in English-speaking countries like the USA, UK, Australia or New Zealand, a comparatively large number of children are born in spite of low governmental support for childcare and correspondingly poorer career and family compatibility (*Sardon* 2006).

There are, however, also many findings that confirm the assumptions of economic theories, for example the negative correlation between education and parenthood among women or the positive correlation between childcare rates and fertility. This partial plausibility suggests that we should not completely reject the economic view of families, but flank and supplement it with other complementary theoretical approaches. Even *Hartmann Tyrell* does not criticise rational choice per se, but “mind you: the hegemony” (*Tyrell* 2006: 142).

There are many alternative theoretical approaches. The hegemony of rational choice could be reduced, for example, through increased consideration of interactionist, constructivist theories such as “doing family” (*Jurczyk/Lange* 2002) or of social practice theories such as *Bourdieu's* (2005). However, the main issue should be how the economic approach can be supplemented *within methodological individualism*, whereby our gaze is drawn mainly to cultural action theories.

In spite of the dominance of economic explanations, cultural approaches never fully disappeared from family research. For example, the theory of the *second demographic transition* (*van de Kaa* 1987; *Lesthaeghe* 1992) is highly popular until today, particularly in demographics. It attributes changes in generative behaviour in particular to a *value shift* (*Inglehart* 1977, 1995). The theory of *gender arrangements* (*Pfau-Effinger* 1996; *Pfau-Effinger et al.* 2009) and others argue that national differences not only stem from different economic circumstances, but also are linked to

“norms, values and Leitbilder”^{*} (Pfau-Effinger 1996: 467). However these two theoretical approaches are hardly able to break the hegemony of rational choice for they do not offer any extensive explanatory approaches, but are limited to very specific issues and contexts. The second demographic transition theory “only” explains the change of patterns of familial behaviour in the 1960s and 1970s. The gender arrangement theory mainly explains national differences in maternal labour force participation within Europe.

Broad action theories that include cultural explanatory approaches are few and far between. One of these is the *role theory*, which played a dominant role in family sociology a few decades ago mainly to explain the division of work between women and men in relationships. It is still significant today, but its application to gender differences and the concept of gender roles (at least in gender studies) in particular have come under fire. For one, the concept is seen as too inflexible and too static (Lorber 1999: 41-42; Rendtorff/Moser 1999: 316). Also, the gender role concept is said to obstruct the view of power and inequality structures in gender relations (Lenz/Adler 2010: 23). But most of all, this interpretation of gender roles is criticised for suggesting something that is only relevant in specific social contexts (in the office, the club, at home) and therefore only in certain phases in the course of the day and lifetime. It applies to the roles of “mother” and “father,” but not for the situation-independent circumstance of being a “woman” or a “man,” thus making the term “gender roles” unsuitable (Hirschauer 2001: 215). The criticism formally does not apply at least to Dahrendorf’s interpretation of role theory, the more so as Dahrendorf (1977: 54-56) considers very general and timeless categories – like being a woman or man, adult, Catholic or German – as roles. Yet the criticism that role theory is less plausible if the reference group to whose expectations an actor is aligned is society as a whole is justified.

According to this criticism, role theory merely offers access to understanding social relationships and behaviour patterns *within* the family, but not to gender or culture specific behaviour patterns *prior* to family formation, such as the decision to have children or not or specific strategies in choosing a partner. Indeed, the contours of the expectation-steered “homo sociologicus” become clearer if we imagine him or her in the context of a group or, better yet, an organisation, and link them to more specific, formally designated positions. In other contexts it is often difficult to define what actor is playing what role and what the relevant reference groups and expectations are to which they are aligned. That which makes people align themselves to gender- and culture-specifically defined normal biographies is possibly more subtle than role theory would make us think.

One concept that attempts to make this influence timelier is that of “*Familienleitbilder*” (“family-related guiding images”) (Diabaté/Lück 2014). The concept is primarily used in Pfau-Effinger’s gender arrangement approach. Pfau-Effinger partly equates the core of the gender culture that makes national differences in the em-

* The German term „Leitbild“ stands for „guiding images“ or „cultural models“ (Pfau-Effinger 2004: 382)

ployment behaviour of women understandable with “norms, values and Leitbilder” (Pfau-Effinger 1996: 467); later describing it with the terms “gender-cultural models,” “family models” or “cultural Leitbilder” (Pfau-Effinger 2001: 493-494). However, she defines the concept fuzzily and mainly uses it only in a macro-sociological sense. Diabaté and Lück therefore base their conceptualisation on Katharina D. Giesel, according to whose definition Leitbilder “[combine] socially divided ... notions of a desired or desirable and basically attainable future...” (Giesel 2007: 245). In Diabaté and Lück’s interpretation, the notions combined in Leitbilder are not necessarily socially controlled by the social environment, nor even necessarily defined by the actors themselves as consciously desirable. They are frequently unquestioned notions of normality that are perceived as a matter of course; some of them that the sociology of knowledge calls everyday knowledge or the reality of everyday life (Berger/Luckmann 2001: 21-48) and that the *theory of frame selection* (Esser 1990, 2002) would consider a pairing of frame and script (I will go into this theory and its terminology later). Leitbilder are not called up in order to avoid ostracism or other negative sanctions, but to gain orientation in a complex decision-making situation without having sufficient information about the advantages and disadvantages (or even merely the existence) of the various available options. In this sense, the approach attempts to be compatible with the constructivist perspective of the *doing family* approach (Jurczyk/Lange 2002) and other concepts from the sociology of knowledge and interactionism. At the same time, the concept is oriented to methodological individualism so that it can be operationalised for quantitative research, and claims to supplement the rational choice perspective in the explanation of familial and generative behaviour in a complementary way. Familienleitbilder (or family-related Leitbilder) are internalised by individuals due to their socialisation and thus independent of positions and functions. They can vary from one person to the next and hence can basically explain individual behavioural differences. They tend, however, to be collectively shared within societies, regions, milieus and generations so that they can also be drawn upon, for example, to explain national differences and form an element of a culture.

In addition to social roles and family-related Leitbilder, there are a number of other culturally normative concepts that can generally be used to explain familial and generative behaviour such as norms and values. In light of the diversity of terms and their not always uniform usage, a disambiguation would be appropriate. It is based on prevalent definitions and – at least for the articles in this volume – aims to ensure uniform terminology (cf. Fig. 1).

We therefore understand an *attitude* to be a relatively tangible, individual, normative, judgemental conviction (e.g. “The mother of a toddler should not go to work”). Fuchs-Heinritz *et al.* define the term in part as “a relatively stable, learned disposition or willingness to react to an object [...] with certain (positive or negative) emotions, perceptions and notions as well as behaviours” and point out that largely the affective component is considered central (Fuchs-Heinritz *et al.* 2007: 156).

Individual convictions that refer not to a normative assessment/judgement, but to an empirical fact are called *assumptions* (e.g. “A toddler suffers when his/her

Fig. 1: Systematisation of culturally normative concepts

		Level		
		Individual (micro)	Collective (macro)	
Conviction (subjectively internalised)	... with regard to a normative assessment (consciously considered)	General / abstract	<i>Individual value</i>	<i>Social value</i>
	... with regard to a relation of normative assessments	Specific / tangible	<i>Attitude</i>	<i>Public opinion</i>
		Specific / tangible	<i>Preference</i>	—
		Specific / tangible	<i>Assumption</i>	—
		(Not specified)	<i>Individual notion of normality</i>	<i>Cultural notion of normality</i>
... with regard to an empirical fact	Specific / tangible			
... with regard to an understood necessity (if unconsidered)	(Not specified)			
Directive (socially controlled)	(Not specified)	<i>Expectation</i>	<i>Social norm</i>	

Source: Author’s schematic depiction

mother goes to work”). These are often suited for justifying attitudes and are therefore methodically sometimes used in place of attitude indicators.

Preferences are subjective weightings of various options (e.g. “I’d rather go to work and remain childless than remain at home with a child”). Unlike attitudes, they do not consist of assessments, but of a relation between a number of assessments and are thus methodically not measured by rating, but by ranking them.

Relatively abstract, individual, normative, judgemental convictions should be seen as *(individual) values* or *value orientations* (e.g. “[I feel that] equal rights are [worth striving for]”). *Clyde Kluckhohn* (1976: 395) offers a broadly used definition of values: “a conception, explicit or implicit, distinctive of an individual or characteristic of a group, of the desirable which influences the selection from available modes, means and ends of action.” Thus, the definition encompasses the two different terms used here of (individual) values and social values. Values or value orientations differ from attitudes in that they do not take a stance on any tangible issue, but cite general principles that may be relevant in all sorts of situations yet are always in need of interpretation. If values are considered the consensus in a certain social collective, they are called *social values*. If an attitude is also considered consensus, we call it *public opinion*. Like attitudes, this differs from social values in that it takes a stance on tangible issues.

Notions of normality, which can also occur combined as *Leitbilder*, were introduced above. These are also subjectively internalised convictions. They are also normative in the sense that they demand a certain behaviour or aspiration for a certain condition. Yet they are not normatively judgemental in the narrower sense: their directive is not based on an actor considering a certain behaviour worth aspiring to, but that he has not considered – whether for lack of time, whether for convenience – the existence and the advantages and disadvantages of alternatives. He

goes without any deliberation, and therefore subjective assessment, and instead adopts an existing, presumably proven script of action. Notions of normality are also commonly collectively shared, so we can differentiate between individual and cultural notions of normality.

Social norms are (usually tacit) directives based on public opinion or social values that demand to be adhered to or implemented. Following such a directive is controlled through positive and negative sanctions. Social norms are defined relatively beyond dispute as “mutually known and accepted standards (rules) of coexistence” (Schäfers 1995: 26, other explanations can be found i.e. in Bellebaum 1994: 36-50). When directives address one specific individual or one single holder of specific roles, we call them *expectations*. Dahrendorf, for instance, does not define the term “expectation,” but uses such terms as “demand” (Dahrendorf 1977: 27) and “demands of society,” as synonyms, which can refer to the behaviour, appearance and character of a holder of positions (Dahrendorf 1977: 33).

It may be a major difference for the subjective perceptions of an individual whether she, for example, acts according to her convictions or bends reluctantly to the social pressure of her environment and does what is expected of her. To this extent, it is quite advisable to differentiate between the various culturally normative concepts at the theoretical level. At the methodically empirical level this proves quite difficult. Often it is left to the subjective interpretation of researchers whether they wish to recognize the impact of normative pressure or of personal convictions in a statistical correlation between a behavioural pattern and a so-called “attitude variable” and what concept they use to characterise these. The possibilities for differentiation are limited, in particular for quantitative research with its standardised measurement instruments. Thus, this question may be better off in reference to qualitative, perhaps even psychological research.

Linking the influence of culturally normative notions and economic utility maximisation is a challenge that is just as important for both methodology and for theory. There have been many proposals in the past – many from rational choice proponents – about how this interaction can be described theoretically. The *subjective expected utility* approach (Savage 1954; Esser 1991) assigns individual subjectivity a decisive role both in the definition of utility and the estimation of occurrence probability, whereby a rational consideration process remains the core of decision-making. Bernhard Nauck (2001) drew up a *value of children* approach that goes back to Lois W. Hoffmann and Martin L. Hoffman (1973) and assumes that the decision to have children or not is an economic one, yet includes both positive emotions and a rise in social status as possible utilities or values of children and thus offers a point of contact for supra-individual cultural assessments. The *RREEMM* model (Lindenberg 1985) proposes fusing *homo oeconomicus* and *homo sociologicus* into a “resourceful restricted evaluating expecting maximising man.”

Our search takes us back to classics like Max Weber who describes, for example, purpose- and value-rational actions as ideal types of logics of action (Weber 1984), or Talcott Parsons, according to whose general theory of action, action (as all systems) is oriented to the four functions of the AGIL scheme: *Adaptation, Goal-attainment, Integration* and *Latent pattern maintenance* (Parsons 1978; Parsons/Shils

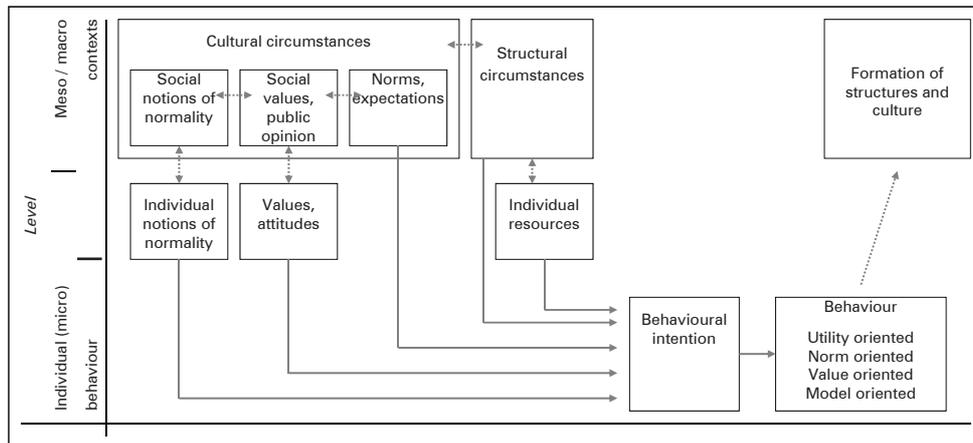
1951; Parsons/Platt 1990). Uwe Schimank's action theory, whose three logics of action besides *homo oeconomicus* and *homo sociologicus* also includes the "*Identitätsbehaupter*" ("*identity preserver*") (Schimank 2007), also offers a solution. Most recently, Hartmut Esser's theory of *frame selection* (1990, 2002) has been relevant in family sociology. Besides economic rationality it includes cultural and, in some circumstances, unconsidered routines, which may lend a marriage stability, for example, or can make the decision to split up practically irreversible, even if current cost-benefit calculations do not make it appear comprehensible. Esser assumes that actors attempt to interpret each situation they find themselves in and allocate them to a culturally prefabricated category of situations that he calls a frame. The choice of a certain frame usually results in a specific action pattern or script. The better and more distinctly the frame matches the current situation, the more likely is it that the actor will choose an automatic, spontaneous mode of action rather than undertaking conscious, rational reflection and thus practically calls up the script as a knee-jerk reaction.

Social psychology provides another approach that combines rational deliberation and culturally normative influences: the *theory of planned behaviour* put forth by Icek Ajzen (1985, 1987, 1991). It starts from the question of the relationship between intentions and actions and correspondingly includes a dual influencing mechanism. Accordingly, people's actions (in the theory: behaviour) are determined by their behavioural intention coupled with their perceived behavioural control. ("Perceived behavioural control" is an individual's belief in her ability to be able to truly act in the intended manner and is similar to the concept of self-efficacy (cf. Hilkenmeier/van Treeck 2007; Tavousi et al. 2009).) Behavioural intention is influenced by the actor's individual attitudes towards the possible action as well as by the actor's perceived social norms ("subjective norms"), coupled with his perceived behavioural control. Individual attitudes are not understood as purely culturally normative constructs, but as a product of subjective assessment of the possible consequences of an action and their subjectively perceived probability of occurring – a concept that is similar to the subjective expected utility theory. Similarly, "subjective norms" are a product of the motivation to fulfil the expectations of a certain attachment figure and assumptions of what this figure expects of one. To this extent, not only the influencing factor of perceived behavioural control exhibits parallels with economically rational action theory, but also the other two. Culturally normative concepts can be found in the influencing factor of social norms and in individual attitudes.

Each of these approaches, depending on the issue and context, may be suited to adequately describe the interplay of culture and utility-oriented deliberation. The choice is left to the theoretical viewpoint of the researcher; how appropriate this choice was is left to a confrontation with empiricism. For the rest, this summary reveals that the theoretical models exhibit a surprising degree of common ground and that some basic figures are repeated. This calls for us to outline a condensed synthesis of these basic figures; a model in which the majority of the theoretical approaches might each be categorised as special cases (see Fig. 2). I will omit only the concept of perceived behavioural control from the theory of planned behaviour, which is rarely considered in family sociology, and thus practically reduce it to its

predecessor, the theory of reasoned action (*Fishbein/Ajzen 1975; Ajzen/Fishbein 1980*). This synthesis consists of seven assumptions:

- An actor's behaviour can result both from conscious rational deliberation and from consciously being led by emotions and intuition ("gut decisions") or can arise from undeliberated automatisms. We should therefore not speak of an action theory, but of a behavioural theory.
- There are two fundamental modes of behavioural logic: economic- or utility-oriented deliberation and behaviour influenced by cultural norms. Utility is not solely monetary benefit in the strict economic sense, but, for example, also a material benefit in the broader sense, the use of a service, labour-saving means, or a gain in prestige. To keep the categories from overlapping, however, utility should not be interpreted so broadly as to include culturally normative behaviour and, for example, consider avoidance of sanctions as a utility, even if this would be possible in individual cases (cf. *Schimank 2007: 85-87, 101-106*). One demarcation could be to consider any personal advantage that is independent of social control as a utility. Behaviour influenced by cultural norms can be subdivided into at least three sub-dimensions, allowing for four modes of behavioural logic:
 - Actors behave *according to utility*: they optimise the ratio from their expected personal advantages as well as their expected personal disadvantages.
 - Actors behave *according to norms*: they attempt to fulfil the expectations and norms of their social environment in order to avoid negative sanctions and reap positive sanctions (in particular integration in the community).
 - Actors behave *according to values*: they attempt to act so that the desirable circumstances (not personal advantages) according to their own personal convictions (attitudes, values) become or remain reality with the greatest probability.
 - Actors behave *according to models*: they orient themselves to internalised "frames," notions of normality and Leitbilder and follow scripts and routines in their behaviour.
- The integration of behavioural logic is a compromise. Economic costs and benefits as well as normative, emotionally perceived pros and cons are "balanced" – consciously or unconsciously – against each other. As a result, behaviour is a hybrid of all four modes of behavioural logic. Interaction effects are also possible. In the case of distinct contradictions, processes become active to reduce cognitive dissonance (*Festinger 1966*).
- The four modes of behavioural logic should be understood as ideal types. The weight given to each mode of behavioural logic varies from case to case and depends on the situation (e.g. on available time, the familiarity of the situation, the existence of normative expectations from the social environment,

Fig. 2: Model explaining individual behaviour

Source: Author's schematic depiction

the existence of relevant personal normative convictions, the availability of information about anticipated costs and benefits, etc.).

- The behaviour-relevant circumstances are situated, depending on the behavioural logic, partially at the micro and partially at the meso or macro level. Utility-oriented behaviour is primarily influenced by individual resources and structural circumstances (Coleman 1990, 1991). Norm-oriented behaviour is based only on norms and expectations of the social environment, value-oriented behaviour only on individual attitudes and values, model-oriented behaviour only on individual notions of normality.
- Since behavioural intentions may fail (e.g. inability to conceive a child), they must be differentiated from actual behaviours and considered intervening variables between initial circumstances and actual behaviour.
- When a behaviour needs to be agreed mutually with other actors (e.g. family planning by a couple), then the behavioural intentions of the involved actors enter a coordination process. This process requires its own theoretical description, which can, for example, be discursive, negotiating or conflictive in nature.

The articles in this special issue are based on varying theoretical concepts, without continuing the discussion presented here in detail. Their demands are primarily empirical. For one, they aim to provide evidence that it is important to take cultural elements into consideration when researching familial and generative behaviour. Secondly, they wish to provide examples of how this can be implemented. In doing

so, they largely make use of quantitative data and methods and attempt to open these for cultural phenomena. Some also rely on qualitative methods.

Due to the repeatedly ascertained discrepancy between attitudes expressed in interviews about the fair division of work in a relationship and its actual realisation, *Daniela Grunow* and *Nina Baur* (2014) examine the extent to which individual convictions correspond to the factual engagement of men based on the household activities of vacuuming, laundering and cooking. They do this using data from the study “*Das Bild des Mannes in der Gesellschaft*” (The Male Image in Society), a standardised CATI survey from 2006.

Dirk Hofäcker and *Jana Chaloupková* (2014) analyse the change in family biographies and in social norms in the familial context in a European comparison. They make use of the third wave of the 2006 European Social Survey. Their article focuses on the question of the extent to which processes of de- and re-standardisation of normal biographies, both of which are observed in various parts of Europe, are accompanied by a corresponding change in social norms.

Anna Dechant and *Florian Schulz* (2014) again take up the subject of the division of work in intimate relationships. They focus on the biographical time of family formation, which we know often results in a re-traditionalisation of the division of work. Based on a qualitative longitudinal study of 14 couples (2006/2007) surveyed shortly before and shortly after having children, they examine what circumstances are pivotal for whether and how the division of work shifts. They are particularly interested in the educational levels of the partners, their homogeneity and for the convictions that tend to correlate with these levels of education about how the division of work should ideally look.

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