

Recent sociological studies on family in France have tended to focus on the relationships between couples, the conjugal family, and the vertical relationships between grandparents, parents and children. However, work carried out at a regional level in France reveals that strong family relationships exist on a more extensive basis (Amiotte-Suchet and Chevalier, 2012; Segalen and Manceron, 2012). Conversely, there appears to be a weakening of extended family relationships, or kinship, in the places we might least expect, such as Southern Europe, for example (Papa and Adriano, 2016); and in developing countries, support systems are being jeopardised by migration and the individualisation of trajectories (De Jong, Roth and Badini-Kinda, 2005). Although contemporary kinship bonds are not always self-evident, needing to be activated by processes of economic exchanges, affects, or regular socialising, the constituents of “practical kinship” (Weber, 2013), a deeper insight is needed into their contours, effects and the form taken by the breakdown of such relations.

The purpose of this symposium is to explore the “blind spots” of sociology and anthropology of the family and kinship by taking a much broader look at family relations in all their extended forms (collateral, by marriage, lineage, etc.). We will be analysing in particular the effects of distance, presence, obligations and conflicts, taking into account the social, material and economic conditions of groups, gender, and individual and collective redefinitions of kinship relations. We would therefore like to bring together contributions from the disciplines of sociology, anthropology and human sciences concerning France, Europe and other continents.

Contemporary kinship is multiple in nature: partly “biologised” – or even potentially re-biologised with medically assisted reproduction techniques – partly elective, emotional, or the result of fostering or adoption. It may also be encouraged or disparaged by European public policies, or be the sole form of support system. Various forms of kinship may co-exist and, even beyond husband-wife and parent-child relationships, affect the distribution of roles and responsibilities between the various protagonists of a *family*, the involvement, or not, of more distant relatives, siblings, etc. Separation in all its forms (divorce, geographical distancing, individualisation, etc.) prompts questioning of *the necessity for proximity* in order to maintain strong kinship ties. Does divorce always bring conflict? Does remoteness result in forgetting, or individualisation in the formalisation of ties? Family relationships are not unchanging and relate to ages and life courses. The purpose of this symposium is therefore to question how kinship links are strengthened or weakened under different temporal, spatial, socioeconomic and cultural conditions.

In this call for proposals we are suggesting 6 topics, which can be approached individually or from a cross-sectional perspective:

### **1. Continuities and redefinitions of kinship networks and transmission**

Transmission strengthens vertical relations and jeopardises collateral links, especially the inheritance of goods and property (Billaud et al., 2015), or intangible or professional heritage (Jacques-Jouvenot, 1997; Jacques-Jouvenot and Schepens, 2007). Do contemporary families have other modes of transmission? Are gender relations and family roles always central in the organisation of lines of descent? One might also look into less common configurations: the inheritance rights of daughters, brother-sister transmissions, or *son-in-law assimilation marriages* (marriages involving the assimilation of the husband into his wife's family) (Weber, 2013). The continuing role of kinship and marriage in transmission may also be explored from the perspective of the reproduction of inequalities.

Intergenerational relationships, previously loaded with obligations, are being restructured in new contexts (Lahouari, 1999; Yunxiang, 2003) or being reinvented under the effect of globalisation. Traditional support systems may be turned on their heads when elderly parents support their adult descendants who do not have a job (Roth, 2010). Migrations generate family configurations dispersed across the globe, while perpetuating more or less formal obligations.

This topic will welcome field surveys exploring the factors that bring about the change/redefinition of kinship and lineage in different parts of the world.

### **2. The role of kinship in hard times (topic supported by Networks 7 and 30 (RT7 and RT30) of the French Sociology Association (AFS) and Research Committee 6 (CR6) of the International Association of French-speaking Sociologists (AISLF))**

In Western Europe, despite the development of professional care provision, the family lies at the centre of chronic disease management and the care provided to ageing family members. Further afield, where public services are non-existent or virtually non-existent, the burden of care lies entirely with the family (Antoine, 2009). Although numerous studies have revealed a highly unequal distribution of care work within the family (Membrado et al., 2005), it is clear that the analyses focus on spouses and children. Here what we are interested in is the role of the extended family in the context of disease and ageing. How do legal family ties correlate with practical kinship, relationships that operate on a daily basis through contact, assistance, moral support and interpersonal relations (Duprat-Kushtanina, 2016)? How are close ties, “virtual family relationships” (Weber, Gojard and Gramain, 2003) (neighbours, friends, professional carers), constructed at times and in places where family is absent due to geographical, social or emotional distance? Lastly, how are these tensions and negotiations

around assistance recorded in the family history (Billaud et al., 2015)? And how do they affect the family history?

### **3. The changes in family relations over the life course**

It seems relevant to look at the development of kinship bonds and affects at various stages of the life course. As such, although collateral relationships (with siblings and cousins) appear to be present in childhood (Vinel, 2017), to what extent do they survive the shift to coupledness and the creation of the domestic group, followed by the formation of one's own lineage (Déchaux, 2007)? There are many types of childhood. Whereas the parental obligation remains dominant in Western Europe, what happens in situations where an absence of familial attachment prevails (street children, abandoned children, orphans, etc.)? Furthermore, labour market instability in Europe raises the question of family support for those regarded as "young people" for an increasingly long time (Galland, 1990; Van De Velde, 2008). As people live for longer, it is not uncommon for 4 or 5 generations to be alive at the same time, which reconfigures the scope of kinship; how does this extension fit with the individualisation of relationships? There are many paths to be explored relating to the redefinition of bonds in the light of these upheavals.

### **4. Conflict and the breakdown of relationships**

Conflicts are rarely studied by sociology and anthropology of the family, which prioritise the analysis of support systems (Petite, 2016). Yet, in families where relationships are no longer governed by statutory obligations but more by interpersonal relations, conflicts and relationship breakdowns are common. The effects of divorces, migrations, and family and social divisions on siblings, collateral relations and descendants are multiple. They often take the form of interpersonal affinities and jealousies, but we need to analyse the underlying social reasons (Eidelman, 2003). We suggest exploring these tensions through the prism of family histories, gender and social divisions within kinship.

### **5. Families and housing: contemporary reorganisation?**

Although family living spaces have attracted the attention of sociologists and anthropologists since the beginnings of the social sciences (Bonvalet, 1997), changes in societies and contemporary kinship invite us to reinvestigate the lifestyles of the generations (Némoz, 2017). Whereas the average size of households has fallen over recent decades, the ways in which families live together have become more complex and deserve to be studied both within and beyond the family home (particularly the physical and intangible redefinitions of the extent and limits of kinship bonds through daily practices, leisure activities, care, consumption, the environment and digital technology, as well as the dual homes of blended families, professional residences, etc.). Living, in this sense, refers to a set of experiences that

are not solely residential. To what extent are changes in family situations changing the way in which premises are occupied (temporary home-stay services, shared gardens, lease-sharing for single-parent families, alternating custody arrangements, etc.)? What are the spaces that reconstruct the circumstances for living and developing kinship (for example, the transitory appropriation of spaces as the reconstruction of family homes after an event)? What challenges are faced? These issues may be explored throughout the life course, in relation to inheritance, conflicts and breakdowns, but also from a cross-sectional perspective, through the policies, practices and representations of family domains.

## **6. Rethinking family and biology**

Contemporary kinship is penetrated by sociotechnical devices related to the development of biological and medical technologies (Carsten, 2000; Strathern, 1992). The issues may seem contradictory. On the one hand, the concept of relatedness is being redefined with the use of medically assisted reproduction, gamete donation, surrogacy and genetic technologies. The increasing artificialisation of procreation moves us away from the idea, in the West, of relatedness being either a natural or biological connection (Courduriès and Herbrand, 2014 ; Fine and Martial, 2010). On the other hand, the use of these technologies may also spark a call for the re-biologisation of family connections (i.e. demands to know the identity of gamete donors, or of “real parents”, etc.), and be associated with a genuine geneticisation of filiation, ancestry, and even identity, with the development of genetic tests for “origin” (Ducournau, 2018). The corresponding issues will need to be identified.

Proposals of up to 2500 characters (including spaces, excluding references) must be submitted by 1 March 2019 by email to: [colloque-parenté@univ-fcomte.fr](mailto:colloque-parenté@univ-fcomte.fr). The selected papers will be announced on 1 April.

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