Agents of Change? Families, Welfare and Democracy in Mid-to-Late Twentieth-Century Europe

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Families have always been vulnerable. They have long been torn apart by the mass migrations of warfare, the oppression of minority groups, the closure of international borders and the refugee crises governed 'from above'. Families have also always been powerful symbols. Nationalist–populist movements have capitalised on fears about familial decline and liberal democracies have built moralistic views of the family into their welfare systems. Yet, this special issue aims to demonstrate that families have not merely been objects or subjects buffeted by political and social change. Rather, families have also consistently acted as 'agents of change'. This is not to valorise the family – families have been patriarchal, damaging and oppressive as well as supportive, empowering and caring. However, this is to say that historical work must take 'the family' seriously as an active participant in shaping historical change.

Introduction

The articles in this issue offer six case studies from across Europe, ranging from the 1940s until the present. These represent diverse and distinct contexts, with vastly different systems of culture, morality, governance and welfare. Yet, in all of these case studies, authors look 'from below' to show how individuals have frequently thought of themselves within 'families'. This powerful construct has governed how individuals have organised their reproductive lives, employment choices and leisure time. Particularly from the late twentieth century, amidst new communication technologies, increased education and focus on public participation in political life, ideas of 'family' also came to shape individuals' campaigning and political behaviours. Countless voluntary associations were forged across Europe, with varying aims, but they acted in the name of 'the family', whether looking to defy, ignore or destabilise the expectations of nations and their welfare apparatus. Putting the idea of 'the family' centrally in our historical work then, as an agent of change, can extend our visions of 'the political' and throw new light on our understandings of how change has been enacted across and within Europe.

This special issue is fuelled, first, by interest in placing concepts of 'family', 'welfare' and 'democracy' into conversation and, second, by a desire to assess how pressing contemporary concerns have been shaped and their limitations and boundaries negotiated by large-scale European shifts since the 1940s. In this moment, shaped by historical visions of national pride and decline, transnational integration is potentially threatened by movements against the European Union in the United Kingdom and beyond. The COVID-19 crisis also sees governments 'lockdown' their borders, or disincentivise international travel. Following previous periods of warfare and crisis, national populations have responded with sympathy, rage, suspicion and indifference to mass movements of refugees, showing the strictly policed limits of 'universal' welfare systems and the simultaneous porosity and strength of imagined national borders. Echoing previous cyclical and ideological changes, across Europe political parties have imposed periods of austerity amidst debate about the limits of free trade, tariff reform and the 'inherent' productivity of populations. State services and welfare

systems have faced increasing demands and decreasing budgets, motivating the revival of historic forms of voluntary action, which challenges and at times replaces government provision and reconstructs boundaries between 'deserving' and 'undeserving' sick and poor. At the same time, highly traditional models of 'the family' are revealed, on the one hand, by media and religion, proffering cultural visions of, for example, royal families, and at the same time by nation-states which provide tax incentives to married couples or those that display preferred models of fertility and breeding. The COVID-19 crisis fuels debate about whether authoritarian states are more able to protect their populations from disease, but at what cost for family and individual freedoms?

Amidst concern about 'fake news' and 'distrust of experts', which may feel highly contemporary, this collection traces contingent, dynamic and longstanding interactions between family, civil society and nation-states, from the 1940s until the present, and across Europe. Together, the articles speak to the contemporary challenge of whether historians may think optimistically about the potential, power and future of 'the family', despite the varied baggage and ideological assumptions that have underpinned this term. This special issue also demonstrates that histories of broad-scale state-level change – of professions, power and global politics – must take families seriously and make them central to their analysis, not only as subjects of global change but as active participants.

The special issue emerges in part from a collaborative research network, The Quest for Welfare and Democracy: Voluntary Associations, Families, and the State, 1880s to the Present.[1] This network was initially sponsored by the European University Institute and is now supported by a grant from European Co-operation in Science and Technology (COST). The network met for collaborative symposia at the European University Institute in February 2016 and November 2017, forging productive discussions from which many of these articles emerged. Three main ideas developed in these discussions, which will be explored below. The introduction first explores grand narratives of welfare and democracy across Europe in the twentieth century, which tend to position families as recipients – or victims – of state power. It then moves on to offer new working approaches to analyses of 'family' and 'agency', through which we can reassess large-scale narratives of democratic change across this significant period. In a third section, the introduction demonstrates how, by using these broad definitions and taking family seriously, we see new visions of chronologies and geographies of change in mid-to-late twentieth-century Europe, more expansive definitions of 'activism' and the ongoing power of gender hierarchies in structuring daily life.

Grand Narratives

Grand narratives of European welfare and democracy over the twentieth century often place families at the whims and behest of warfare, state politics, and demographic and cultural change. Warfare across and beyond Europe is particularly central to these narratives, as a disruptor of family life, but also as moments in which families appear as a symbol of hope and reconstruction. Vast historiographies surround, for example, the evacuation of children during the Second World War across Europe, perceived to protect future families and generations. This research is very much tied to ideas of welfare – in British debates, historians continue to contest and nuance the interpretation of Richard Titmuss that evacuation, revealing the state of working-class children and their health, was a key motivator behind the introduction of the welfare state.[2] These works are significant in connecting

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historiographies around welfare and warfare but, at the same time, often struggle to centre the experiences of family life or childhood – echoing the critique of Harry Hendrick that the familial issues of separation and emotional adjustment were 'rarely taken seriously by those who made policy' and indeed that 'much more important was the influence of political and economic calculations'.[3] Hendrick argues that the work of 'social investigators, eugenically inclined pronatalists and, most influentially, child psychiatrists/psychoanalysts and social workers' all instead propagated a wartime notion of children as 'social investments', whose futures must be protected because they determined the future of British society.[4] Within this formulation, the family likewise was a unit to be mobilised or utilised by social policy makers and professions, rather than an independent agent of change.

Further entrenching the prioritisation of the state as the central actor in existing historiographies, significant literatures also consider ways in which European dictatorships have separated families and subjected them to political violence, coercion and control. In an issue of *Contemporary European History*, Paul Ginsborg described how the regimes of Adolf Hitler, the communists of the Soviet Union and Francisco Franco persecuted and discriminated against families deemed 'hereditarily unfit', 'hostile', 'worthless', 'foreign' and 'disease-ridden'.[5] Fleeing state violence – from their own and nearby governments – refugees moved across Europe: from the Basque Country to the United Kingdom during the Spanish Civil War; or from Austria, Czechoslovakia, Finland, and Poland to the United Kingdom, Belgium, Sweden, France and Holland before the Second World War.[6] These movements, Peter Anderson has argued, can be perceived as a lens through which to understand 'entangled relationship[s]' between campaigners across borders, as well as 'battle[s] for control' of 'children's minds or souls'.[7] Once more, as in literatures about the recruitment of migrants across Europe for the labour market, the family is presented as an object for government, voluntary or professional visions of recovery, reconstruction and control.[8] Children's and families' 'minds' or 'souls' are represented as malleable and available resources in historiography, as well as in historical policies and representations.

States have also mobilised their welfare systems – a central object of interest within this special issue – to manipulate and reshape family life. Previous scholarship has looked to consider, for example, political discussions around whether family life should be protected by the state, or shaped by it; a distinction framed by approaching state–family relations 'from above'.[9] State welfare systems could disrupt family lives – taking children into care – or enrich and support them. This simple dichotomy has been complicated, meanwhile, by the politicisation of welfare systems used to, for example, take children into care if their parents were deemed 'morally unfit' because of their 'religious failings', or if their families opposed current political systems, for example as in 1920s Spain during the

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Cambridge University Press, 1999), 13; John Welshman, 'Evacuation and Social Policy During the Second World War: Myth and Reality', *Twentieth Century British History*, 9 (1998), 53. Historians such as George Gosling, Martin Gorsky, Daniel Fox and John Stevenson, meanwhile, have emphasised the continuities between post- and pre-war welfare settlements, thus challenging the idea that evacuation was a highly significant shifting force: see Daniel M. Fox, 'The National Health Service and the Second World War', in Harold Smith, ed., *War and Social Change: British Society in the Second World War* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1986), 32–57; John Stevenson, 'Planner's Moon? The Second World War and the Planning Movement', in Smith, ed., *War and Social Change*, 58–77.

[3] Harry Hendrick, *Child Welfare: Historical Dimensions, Contemporary Debate* (Bristol: Policy Press, 2003), 128–9.

[4] Harry Hendrick, 'Children as Human Capital: Some Historical and Contemporary Perspectives on Social Investment', Nov. 2011. Draft Paper, 6.

[5] Paul Ginsborg, 'The Politics of the Family in Twentieth-Century Europe', *Contemporary European History*, 9, 3 (2000), 421–2.

[6] Peter Anderson, 'The Struggle over the Evacuation to the United Kingdom and Repatriation of Basque Refugee Children in the Spanish Civil War: Symbols and Souls', *Journal of Contemporary History*, 52, 2 (2017), 297–318.

[7] Ibid., 298.

[8] Lauren Stokes, '"An Invasion of Guest Worker Children": Welfare Reform and the Stigmatisation of Family Migration in West Germany', *Contemporary European History*, 28 (2019), 372–89.

[9] James Chappel, 'Nuclear Families in a Nuclear Age: Theorising the Family in 1950s West Germany', *Contemporary European History*, 26, 1 (2017), 86.

authoritarian governance of General Primo de Rivera, and during the Spanish Civil War.[10] The idea of 'welfare', likewise, could be used to disenfranchise disadvantaged or migrant groups: Lauren Stokes has outlined how in West Germany, from 1974, representations of child migrants as 'welfare migrants' presented family reunification as illegitimate.[11]

Much existing historiography therefore focuses closely on the ideology and ideas of family – on familialism – rather than on the agency and actions of families themselves and the power of their everyday, and indeed at times remarkable, lives. Certainly, existing historiography usefully demonstrates ways in which governments have sought to exploit the potential of the family, creating experimental and interventionist 'utopian' schemes. These schemes have tried to reshape society but also, at times, humanity, for example through selective sterilisation, pronatalism and the provision – or absence – of state childcare and education. Families in this vision may be protectors of future hopes, or offer ways to reconcile and recover from violent ideological pasts.[12] The family has not always been central to ideological life and scholars have considered the absence, as well as the presence, of familialism within state apparatus. Elizabeth Waters has argued that the Bolsheviks in Russia did not make the family central but rather expressed interest in liberating women and creating a more productive society, by supporting community rather than family or women's responsibility for childcare, housework and home-making (while still often assuming that women would be the primary providers of such work, merely organised through state-managed public systems).[13]

Families are thus often presented in existing historiography as respondents to, or symbolic within, large-scale change. Other strands of historiography still consider the family as a demographic unit to be analysed and assessed in terms of its quantitative structures. Edward Shorter, John Knodel and Etienne Van de Walle, for example, have argued that between 1880 and 1940 'illegitimate' fertility in Europe – childbirth outside of marriage – fell 'precipitously', by 50 per cent or more in most countries. Despite exceptions in terms of, for example, the United Kingdom, Switzerland and the Netherlands (where decline started earlier in the century) or Portugal and Sweden (where decline started later), these authors argue that the parallels in timing and pace of decline across Europe were 'close' in a large number of countries and provinces.[14] After 1940, the authors write, some countries experienced an 'illegitimacy boom'.[15] These types of demographic histories provide an analysis of family structure; and yet, this special issue contends, to understand the meanings of these changes – and indeed their causes, and the causes of such national variation – we must simultaneously utilise sources that represent the qualitative experiences and lives of those affected. Analysing families as 'agents of change', as in this special issue, enables us to understand the parallels and specificities in national stories, and to see how everyday life interacts dynamically with global change.

Redefining Family

As Alexandra Walsham has argued, 'working definitions' are 'themselves crucial tools for rethinking existing approaches'.[16] This special issue argues that we must redefine 'family' in a broad, dynamic, expansive way which both requires a shift in definition and, in parallel, a rethinking of this unit's role, relevance and relationships to welfare and democracy, whereby family life is placed centrally as an agent of change, not merely as a passive recipient or bystander. In terms of existing definitions of family, a classic formulation by Raymond Williams tells us that the term 'family' only came into

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[10] Peter Anderson, 'The Struggle over the Evacuation to the United Kingdom', 300.

[11] Stokes, 'An Invasion of Guest Worker Children', 372–89.

[12] Chappel, 'Nuclear Families in a Nuclear Age', 86.

[13] Elizabeth Waters, 'The Bolsheviks and the Family', *Contemporary European History*, 4, 3 (1995), 275–91.

[14] Edward Shorter, John Knodel and Etienne Van De Walle, 'The Decline of Non-Marital Fertility in Europe, 1880–1940', *Population Studies*, 25, 3 (1971), 375.

[15] Ibid., 377.

[16] Alexandra Walsham, 'The Social History of the Archive: Record-Keeping in Early Modern Europe', *Past & Present*, Supplement 11 (2016), 13.

English in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries, emerging from words for 'household' and 'servant'. The idea of the family as 'the small kin-group, usually living in one house' became powerful by the nineteenth century.[17] This kind of narrow definition – that focuses on the shape of families, rather than their meaning – fails to recognise the ways in which family life has been defined in relation to moral and cultural values. Certainly, over the mid-to-late twentieth century, ideas of 'normality', 'stability' and the 'natural' permeated and shaped how families were recognised and rewarded in welfare states, and how individuals themselves constituted and discussed their roles in household and domestic spaces.

Many of the governmental and bureaucratic categories encountered in this collection operated with tight categories of 'family' which often revolved around heteronormative models of masculine leadership in married heterosexual couples. Official inquiries, Lindsey Earner-Bryne argues, 'generalise[d]' about the family 'without due attention to differentials of power and wider structural issues'. Yet, as contributors repeatedly demonstrate, the families that emerged, lived and coped within these systems were not the two-parent and two-child models which the systems assumed. Accordingly, and in order to recognise the significance of daily life, this special issue takes the broadest possible definition of families. It accepts that 'families' have been constructed beyond biological boundaries and reflect a series of personal, community and structural settlements and accommodations.[18] This broad definition enables the issue to discover connections between the *shape* of families and the *moral politics* which have been formed around their political actions and daily lives.

Indeed, various moral visions of the family are significant throughout this collection: articles explore how cultural and social norms inflected visions of the family as 'functional', 'new' and 'old', 'market-conforming', 'strong', 'civilised', 'patriarchal' and a solution to, or cause of, moral dilemmas. Contributors also analyse a range of family structures, variously brought together by service, generation, duty or payment. Groups have sought out social and economic benefit – from churches, charities and state – by defining themselves as 'family', and thus have lived their lives in accordance with this idea, reshaping it accordingly. Families themselves have resisted state and professional categories, as well as having adapted to them. We see in this analysis how individuals whose biological families may not have adequately met their needs sought to readopt this concept to reflect the material conditions of their lives.

Recognising this broad and expansive definition of family life also means accepting the premise that, for individuals and in culture, families negotiate everyday and political meaning. They are intimately tied to – and defined by – the most fundamental human events: birth and death, as well as by complex and powerful social rituals around marriage, separation and friendship. Families are key providers of individual 'fulfilment', social care, and formal and informal education, but also, at times, responsible for psychological trauma, frustrated ambition and unhappiness. The family thus has much potential to provide services and to shape future citizens and their subjectivities as 'docile', 'productive' or 'liberated'. Paul Ginsborg and Jane Humphries have also discussed how the family can be 'subversive' and, as Humphries writes, 'resist impositions which force it and its individual members' into distinct ideological moulds – even those proffered by academic and popular writings.[19] 'The

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17 Raymond Williams, *Keywords: A Vocabulary of Culture and Society*, rev. edn (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1983), 131–4.

18 Though disappointingly this collection has not managed to include an article focused on the experiences of LGBTQ+ families, this definition draws on the ideas from the article: Matt Cook, 'Families of Choice? George Ives, Queer Lives and the Family in Early Twentieth-Century Britain', *Gender & History*, 22, 1 (2010), 1–20. Relevant forthcoming work, which will further illuminate this area, will develop from Hannah Elizabeth's Wellcome-funded project, 'What's love got to do with it? Building and maintaining HIV-affected families through love, care and activism in Edinburgh 1981–2016'.

19 Ginsborg discusses this in: Paul Ginsborg, 'The Politics of the Family in Twentieth-Century Europe', *Contemporary European History*, 9, 3 (2000), 413. Humphries makes this case during a lively and insightful critique of Ferdinand Mount's book, *The Subversive Family: An Alternative History of Love and Marriage* (1982); Jane Humphries, 'The Reified Family and Tory Social Policy', *Economy and Society*, 13, 1 (1984), 101.

family' may, we see throughout this collection, operate as a unit in responding to social or political change, even while its members live in significant disagreement and conflict.

Thus, this special issue not only aims to look at 'the family', but seeks to blend large-scale analysis of changing trends – of political and global change – with recognition of the everyday and the 'small' in history. In doing so, it extends a recent emergent historiographical trend. Significant here is the landmark work of Elaine Tyler May, whose study of post-war families in America located their thoughts, feelings and emotions 'within the larger political culture' of the Cold War, 'not outside it', making a persuasive case that Cold War ideology and domestic revival were 'two sides of the same coin: post-war Americans' intense need to feel liberated from the past and secure in the future'.[20] Paul Ginsborg has likewise drawn on Hegelian analysis to argue that we must consider relationships between the family, civil society and the state, and the 'interlocking and conflictual' relationships between these actors which 'define the boundaries of politics'.[21] For Ginsborg, such analysis will make a 'methodological priority' of connecting family, political and social history.[22] A recent edited collection by Hester Barron and Claudia Siebrecht, *Parenting and the State in Britain and Europe, c. 1870–1950* (2017), has also been significant in this trend, showing the benefits of comparing democratic and fascist regimes across Europe, and of centring parents as units of analysis.[23] This analysis aims to subvert and challenge accounts by, for example, Emile Durkheim, Michel Foucault or – more recently – Nikolas Rose, which placed families, citizens and children as objects within national, psychological and educational interventions – absorbing and reflecting, rather than reshaping, social and cultural norms.

In particular, this collection is interested in 'agency' and the family as 'agents of change'. This is a fraught concept. In recent years, attempts to find 'agency' in women's and children's history have been criticised as inadequate.[24] Mona Gleason and Lynn M. Thomas have provocatively asked whether historians have made agency an endpoint of study rather than a beginning.[25] Making a related critique, Chris Millard has explored whether historians valorise 'experience', building on the disciplinary assumptions of psychoanalysis, social history and anthropology, and leave invocations of 'experience' as seemingly irrefutable.[26] This collection takes these lessons seriously, yet argues that agency – like family – can provide a significant lens for analysis. Cutting-edge research, particularly in the history of childhood, has used agency in productive ways. Kathryn Gleadle and Ryan Hanley, for example, have shown that it is productive to read even adult-generated sources through the lens of children's agency, particularly by looking at absences, while Susan A. Miller, Tatek Abebe, Mischa Honeck and Gabriel Rosenberg have unpicked how social contexts shape the boundaries of youthful agency

[20] Elaine Tyler May, *Homeward Bound: American Families in the Cold War Era* (New York, NY: Basic Books, 1988), 10.

[21] Ginsborg, 'The Politics of the Family', 411.

[22] Ibid.

[23] Hester Barron and Claudia Siebrecht, *Parenting and the State in Britain and Europe, c. 1870–1950* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2017).

[24] For influential examples from early women's history, see, for example: Sheila Rowbotham, *Hidden from History* (London: Pluto Press, 1990); Gerda Lerner, 'Placing Women in History: A 1975 Perspective', *Feminist Studies*, 3 (1975), 5–14.

[25] Mona Gleason, 'Avoiding the Agency Trap: Caveats for Historians of Children, Youth, and Education', *History of Education*, 45, 4 (2016), 446–59; Lynn M. Thomas, 'Historicising Agency', *Gender & History*, 28, 2 (2016), 324–39; Susan A. Miller, 'Assent as Agency in the Early Years of the Children of the American Revolution', *Journal of the History of Childhood and Youth*, 9, 1 (2016), 48–65; Tatek Abebe, 'Reconceptualising Children's Agency as Continuum and Interdependence', *Social Sciences*, 8, 3 (2019), 1–16. See introduction to this special issue and also its articles: Mischa Honeck and Gabriel Rosenberg, 'Transnational Generations: Organizing Youth in the Cold War', *Diplomatic History*, 38, 2 (2014), 233–9, in particular Marcia Chatelain, 'International Sisterhood: Cold War Girl Scouts Encounter the World', *Diplomatic History*, 38, 2 (2014), 261–70; Sean Guillory, 'Culture Clash in the Socialist Paradise: Soviet Patronage and African Students' Urbanity in the Soviet Union', *Diplomatic History*, 38, 2 (2014), 271–81.

[26] Chris Millard, 'Using Personal Experience in the Academic Medical Humanities: A Genealogy', *Social Theory & Health*, 18 (2019), 184–98.

over generations, space and place.[27] The idea of 'agency', in these accounts, enables us to think seriously about the choices that individuals and groups have made, and the paths that they have forged, while also recognising how individual 'choice' has been bounded by structure and relationships.

This collection – because of its scope across time and space – looks to further expand the idea of agency as relational, in two ways. First, the case studies in this collection show how the capacity of families to act as 'agents of change' has been contingent on the structural conditions of authoritarian, liberal democratic, or fascistic societies, and on families' identities of gender, race, ethnicity, class, religions and disability. Not all families have been equally able to exercise 'agency' in lobbying for change, despite employing similar mechanisms of campaigning and resistance. Second, the collection shows how the agency of 'the family' has been itself fundamentally shaped by familial discord and conflict. Articles in this collection frequently show moments in particular where women's interests in the family came into conflict with those of men. Yet the collection also discusses when extended family members had different priorities to biological parents and when children were not necessarily best represented by their parents. As mentioned, internally, families have been repressive, patriarchal and abusive as well as moral, supportive and caring. Looking to 'agency' as relational makes this clearer and helps us to pay attention to distinctions within 'the family', while also taking seriously the ways in which individuals have nonetheless used this construct to mobilise for change. The collection thus argues that analysing the family as an 'agent' in social change makes clear the power of this construct in policy, welfare systems and daily life across time and space. The idea of 'agency' also affords space to analyse the multiple relationships – by and within families – that shape action.

So, rather than consider how nation-states looked to control families across this period, which has so far been a dominant trend in writing about families in history, this special issue breaks with prevailing interpretations to prioritise families themselves as historical actors, as subjects and agents in historical change. Furthermore, putting families – not merely citizens, children or 'members of the public' – at the centre of our examination is critical, not least for the political symbolism of this unit. Focused discussion of the family can easily be missed in scholarship, when constructions of family are both highly contested but also mundane: difficult to define and yet also eternally *present*, in political campaigning, daily life and cultural representation. By making the family central, this special issue looks beyond the individual case studies provided and rather seeks to challenge ongoing scholarship to make the agency of this significant social grouping a central focus. Furthermore, this collection demonstrates that, despite the complexities of the term 'family', placing this unit centrally can lead to dynamic and important scholarship, which interweaves across and between existing literatures on international, national and daily life, and throws new light on ideas of citizenship, solidarity and inclusion.

New Themes

This special issue thus extends and applies a significant, emergent methodological approach. Notably, it offers case studies of families who have not typically been subject to historiographical attention: military families facing reunification; families of 'gifted' or 'autistic' children; mothers in Ireland and Spain; and 'foreign' families settling in West Germany. The articles look to analyse the agency of these families from their own perspectives. For Jennifer Crane and Lauren Stokes, family perspectives are revealed through analysis of voluntary papers, diaries and letters. Articles by Grace Huxford and Elisa Chuliá make use of rich oral histories to uncover and explore family views. Other authors, however, given the sources available, must read 'against the grain' of professional and expert documents to consider the spaces within which families could act, resist or conform. Lindsey Earner-Bryne, for example, carefully pieces together limited newspaper coverage of unmarried Irish

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[27] Kathryn Gleadle and Ryan Hanley, 'Children Against Slavery: Juvenile Agency and the Sugar Boycotts in Britain', *Transactions of the Royal Historical Society*, 30 (2020), 97–117; Miller, 'Assent as Agency', 48–65; Tatek Abebe, 'Reconceptualising Children's Agency as Continuum and Interdependence', *Social Sciences*, 8, 3 (2019), 1–16.

mothers, seeking to restore their dignity. Jonathyne Briggs reflects on contemporary criticism by autistic people of historic campaigning, enabling him to critically assess the nature of family dynamics in late twentieth-century France.

Furthermore, analysis of the family as an agent of change can disrupt our existing thinking about the overarching chronologies of the mid-to-late twentieth century. A classic chronology of this period in Western Europe has been developed by Paul Ginsborg, who suggests that there was a 'major expansion' of welfare services from 1945, further attention paid to issues of social and gender inequality in the family from 1960 to 1974, and policy fixation on falling birth rates and single-parent families after 1985 as well as 'major battles over efficiency, privatisation and residualisation' for the 1980s and 1990s.[28] Further historiographies place heavy framing on the 1960s as a moment of sexual revolution and the 1970s as a feminist revival.[29] As Ginsborg acknowledges, however, these types of broad chronology require 'heavy qualifications', as distinct regional models have emerged.[30] In particular, Ginsborg highlights: the Scandinavian focus on universalism; Britain and Ireland's focus on low-income families, a 'corporatist continental model which traces its origins to a Bismarckian tradition'; and the Southern European focus on combining universal health care with 'a deep-rooted clientelist tradition'.[31] This model, furthermore, does not account for changes in Eastern Europe, which must be viewed as entwined with, shaping and shaped by those in 'the West'.

By taking the family as the central agent of change, this collection offers new, and more complex, chronologies and boundaries. First, looking through this narrow lens of the family reveals the kinds of complex partnerships that were forged around 'family issues' and 'family life', which crosscut any unitary narratives of power. Lauren Stokes's article, for example, shows how, in West Germany in the 1970s, debate about family migration in the context of welfare opened up the 'possibility for radical alliances between ordoliberals and neoliberals who prefer a limited welfare state and conservative Catholic thinkers'. This kind of uneasy coalition, mobilising around one key issue, breaks down any idea of the 1970s as simply a moment of a liberal 'new' society, or as a regressive 'backlash' against the 1960s revolution.

Looking through the lens of the family also breaks down the presumed historiographical separation between 'East' and 'West' Europe in the mid-to-late twentieth century, building on Margaret E. Peacock's comparison of childhood in the Soviet Union and the United States, and a recent study of 'authenticity' collated by Joachim C. Häberlen, Mark Keck-Szajbel and Kate Mahoney.[32] Grace Huxford and Jennifer Crane's articles both show how families were seen in policy as a bastion in building links between East and West, while families themselves often rejected this apparent distinction in 'ways of life'. Lindsey Earner-Bryne argues that the purported liberal values of 'the West' did not extend to 1960s Ireland, where the cultural significance of religion created significant shaming and stigma around birth control and family planning. Despite an apparent 'sexual revolution', women

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[28] Ginsborg, 'The Politics of the Family', 441.

[29] Chappel, 'Nuclear Families in a Nuclear Age', 85–109; Jane Lewis, 'Gender and the Development of Welfare Regimes', *Journal of European Social Policy*, 2, 3 (1992), 159–73; Sarah Fishman, *From Vichy to the Sexual Revolution: Gender and Family Life in Postwar France* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2017).

[30] Ginsborg, 'The Politics of the Family', 441.

[31] Ibid.

[32] Margaret E. Peacock, *Innocent Weapons: The Soviet and American Politics of Childhood in the Cold War* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2014), 1; Joachim C. Haberlen, Mark Keck-Szajbel and Kate Mahoney, *The Politics of Authenticity: Countercultures and Radical Movements across the Iron Curtain, 1968–1989* (New York, NY: Berghahn, 2019). See also Laura Lee Downs, 'ERC Grant: Reframing Welfare History in Modern Europe', available at https://www.eui.eu/ServicesAndAdmin/CommunicationsService/News/2020/ERC-grant-Reframing-welfare-history-in-modern-Europe (last visited 22 Feb. 2020); Sonja Levsen and Jörg Requate, 'Why Europe, Which Europe? Present Challenges and Future Avenues for Doing European History', *Hypotheses*, available at https://europedebate.hypotheses.org/86 (last visited 22 Mar. 2021); Sarah Marks, 'What Difference Has the Opening of the Archives Since 1991 Made to the Historiography of Communism and the Cold War?', in Jessica Reinisch and David Brydan, eds., *Researching and Teaching Twentieth Century History* (London: The Historical Association, 2020).

across East and West Europe alike at times continued to have low levels of knowledge about family planning and were not always comfortable discussing it.[33]

Approaching the family as an agent, rather than a subject or recipient, of state systems also helps us to think broadly about how families' everyday lives comprise forms of activism. In this special issue, we see a range of voluntary associations forged by families: loose and generational social movements relating to permissiveness; charities and non-governmental organisations providing services neglected by the state, whether due to war or moral and religious politics; and small parents' groups, which took one-off or sustained legal and media action. These types of overt action position the late twentieth century as a moment in which small groups – often acting as or for families – were able to attract media and public policy attention to a new degree, effectively utilising their experiential and professional expertise, and mobilising new forms of media and communication technology to demand and create change. These organisations used ideas of 'the family' in ways that could represent a traditional notion of the family that did not recognise childhood voices or experience. This point is central to Jonathyne Briggs' article about autistic families in contemporary France, where he shows that parents came to represent the 'autistic family' instead of autistic young people themselves.

This special issue also shows how the inaction of families, or their refusal to comply with state systems, could also drive significant change. For instance, Lauren Stokes's article discusses how 'foreign' couples, invited to West Germany to solve perceived issues from employment to sexual relations, could undermine the guest workers' programme simply by bringing their children with them – an action which the programme had failed to account or plan for.[34] Elisa Chuliá's interviews with Spanish women demonstrate that while, for some, education was a 'space for opposition to the dictatorship' of General Franco, other women in hindsight consider themselves 'dumb, blind and deaf' to the political changes of this moment. Women also drove change by covertly gaining hold of contraceptives, the prescription, sale, or advertisement of which were banned in Spain until 1978. Families were therefore agents of change, but that change was at times demanded and led consciously over this period, through longer-standing forms of activism, whereas at other times it was brought about by new moves towards individualism and privacy, driving and reflecting internalist models of family life.[35] Hence, looking at families in this way, we begin to see how they are leaders of change as well as followers, whether driving change through inactivity, demographic shifts, everyday life or conscious efforts at resistance and activism. As Elisa Chuliá argues, the very creation of one's own family can be a 'personal project'.

While illuminating changes in national and family lives, this collection positions these as entwined, not separate. Indeed, the themes of gender and nationhood emerge as key throughout this special issue in crosscutting the politics of family and state. In terms of gender, the collection shows the consistency across national and chronological borders, from families, policy makers and voluntary experts alike, with which fathers were seen as key for the 'appropriate' psychological development of children, the maintenance of family life and the priority figure for family reunification. Mothers, meanwhile,

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[33] For rich further discussions of this complex area, see also the introductions and contents of the following two special issues: Jesse Olszynko-Gryn and Caroline Rusterholz, 'Reproductive Politics in Twentieth Century France and Britain', *Medical History*, 63, 2 (2019), 117–33; Agata Ignaciuk and Laura Kelly, 'Contraception and Catholicism in the Twentieth Century: Transnational Perspectives on Expert, Activist and Intimate Practices', *Medical History*, 64, 2 (2020), 163–72. See also Yuliya Hilevych, 'Later, If Ever: Family Influences on the Transition from First to Second Birth in Soviet Ukraine', *Continuity and Change,* 31, 2 (2016), 275–300.

[34] This theme is also explored by two articles, both examining how familial ties inhibited active participation in state systems: John Foot's examination of Comasina, Italy, between the 1950s and 1970s, and R. J. B. Bosworth's analysis of Italians' focus on daily family life to 'resist or even ignore the contradictions and oppression of life under a dictatorship' in fascist Italy:John Foot, 'The Family and the "Economic Miracle": Social Transformation, Work, Leisure and Development at Bovisa and Comasina (Milan)', *Contemporary European History*, 4, 3 (1995), 329; R. J. B. Bosworth, 'Everyday Mussolinism: Friends, Family, Locality and Violence in Fascist Italy', *Contemporary European History*, 14, 1 (2005), 23–43.

[35] Paul Ginsborg, 'Familism', in Paul Ginsborg, ed., *Stato dell'Italia* (Milan: Il Saggiatore Burno Mondadori, 1994), as cited in ibid., 330.

were heralded as producing future leaders, but typically only supported if reproducing within moral frameworks such as the two-parent patriarchal family. Mothers were also blamed for conditions such as autism, as Jonathyne Briggs shows, or praised for raising 'gifted children', as Jennifer Crane discusses. The parenting of mothers rather than that of the father or other childcare providers was centrally analysed and criticised in all case studies.[36]

Indeed, multiple case studies in this collection demonstrate that, despite the purported rise of feminism, women's reproductive labour was built into, and remained integral within, the various 'welfare states' of Britain, Ireland, and West Germany alike over the late twentieth century. Rigidly hierarchical and patriarchal gendered ideas were also used by states to place new demands on family life, displacing identities of 'mother' or 'father' with illegal migrant or tax-dodging citizen, or, indeed, soldier. The special issue finds cases where families were able to resist gendered assumptions. The oral history studies in the collection, in particular, make clear the variety of strategies of communication and shared work within all family structures. Nonetheless, gendered assumptions remained relatively rigid, powerful and present across Europe and throughout the mid-to-late twentieth century, particularly when emboldened by religious cultural beliefs. Families could also use their agency to further ingrain, as well as to challenge and discredit, existing structural dynamics of power, further adding to our understandings of 'family' as a destructive, as well as supportive, social space.

Ideas of the nation also crosscut state and family politics throughout this collection, which chronicles decades in which national conflicts and new transnational alliances were forged, alongside the rise of nationalist–populist movements and a growing sense of national exceptionalism in many countries.[37] Articles by Grace Huxford and Lauren Stokes analyse family reunification, which was premised on, and governed by, state-led expectations of national divides, whereby certain families, deemed 'foreign' or members of the military, were excluded or included in national configurations. Family reunification schemes, seen in this special issue, were intended to solve perceived local issues of, for example, men's sexual aggression or to offer specific exemplars of family life. Yet the invocation of 'Europe' also became a powerful one over this period, with politicians and press alike critically framing their countries as 'the most backward nation in Europe', for example.[38] Families in this collection, and across borders of place and time, were at times affected by, ignorant of, or resistant to such national and transnational visions. Families with a so-called 'gifted' child, for example, as studied in Jennifer Crane's article, were called upon by the conservative press hoping to mobilise these children to reverse economic decline yet, themselves, often worked in co-operation with European voluntary associations looking to share knowledge and resources around children's intellectual resources. Looking to the family, furthermore, shows how ideas of nation were broken down by distinct regional identities and stereotypes operating across, for example, Spain and Italy.

Thus, the comparative approach of this collection enables us to consider how nations have been constructed and formed as well as their relationships with shifting family life, across different geographical contexts and in a rapidly changing period of history. Existing historiography has positioned the family as assumed yet also absent within European politics over this period. Lauren Stokes highlights that the European Coal and Steel Community, formed by six European countries in 1952, discussed child allowances for working migrants in 1955, in an analysis that encompassed ideas of

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[36] See, also in this area, Sarah Knott, *Mother: An Unconventional History* (New York, NY: Viking, 2019); the introduction and articles in the following special issue: Sarah Knott and Emma Griffin, eds., 'Special Issue Supplement 15: Mothering's Many Labours', *Past & Present*, 246 (2020).

[37] This tension has also been highlighted by Ellen Boucher, who has analysed how the Save the Children Fund sought to cultivate a new vision of internationalism in Britain after the Second World War, while national press and politicians in Britain focused on 'hostility towards Germany and Austria': Ellen Boucher, 'Cultivating Internationalism: Save the Children Fund, Public Opinion and the Meaning of Child Relief, 1919–24', in Laura Beers and Geraint Thomas, eds., *Brave New World: Imperial and Democratic Nation-Building in Britain between the Wars* (London: Institute of Historical Research, 2011), 174.

[38] Peter Anderson, 'The Struggle over the Evacuation to the United Kingdom and Repatriation of Basque Refugee Children in the Spanish Civil War: Symbols and Souls', *Journal of Contemporary History*, 52, 2 (2017), 302.

residency, family stability and entitlement.[39] Nonetheless, Ginsborg has argued that the European Union has rarely 'elaborated a vision of family politics', but rather that policies relating to the family spun out indirectly from other social policy questions.[40] This collection, by taking an expansive view of politics and policy makers, shows how a range of voluntary and professional experts hoped that families would be ambassadors in a new Europe, displaying the 'moral superiority' or 'value' of liberal democratic sentiments as ambassadors and icons, or driving economic prosperity for imagined futures. British military families, policy makers hoped, would display the failures of social policy in Soviet-occupied East Germany and Eastern Europe. Meanwhile, psychologists in Britain planned to draw on lessons from these states to guide how best to identify and mobilise their so-called 'gifted' youth.

Concluding Remarks

In this way, this special issue focuses historians' attention on the European family, in varied forms, but also contends that ideas of family, democracy, welfare, professions and civil society must be seen in constant conversation. By looking at these areas in tandem, with the family as a key lens, this special issue looks at the very nature of power itself in a critical period of modern history, and how it is exchanged, realised, lived and enacted between nation-states, voluntary organisations and family units. The special issue raises key historiographical and contemporary questions. When do professions think that families need 'support' and when do they need 'independence' and 'autonomy'? Who defines family rights, and which social groups are included and excluded from discussion of 'needs', rights and responsibilities? Which organisations provide for families over time, and what are their ethical assumptions, priorities and foundations? What is the changing role of the state? Do shifts towards 'informal' family structures place increasing burdens on state welfare, and how do states respond, in moments of fiscal austerity, to ideological change or total war?

The collection develops an emergent strand of historiography which aims to examine the family simultaneously as an agent, not a subject or object, of change within national imaginaries and in everyday life. It looks across Europe, specifically with case studies of Britain, Ireland, France, Spain, East and West Germany. This is, of course, far from a 'complete' portrait of all families across all of Europe. Nonetheless, these specific case studies can offer a new analysis of liberal democratic, fascistic and authoritarian states. They can provide some assessment, also, of how religion, generation and national histories complicated the politics of ongoing government regimes and their effects on family life. These case studies also enable us to better understand how European internationalism co-existed with new strands of nationalism over the mid-to-late twentieth century. Far more significant work must continue to be done in this area, and this special issue is intended as a contribution to an ongoing and new conversation, with the hope that rich new case studies from new research will continue, in subsequent years, to challenge and nuance its findings.

In framing its analysis around the 'mid-to-late twentieth century', this collection emphasises that the post-war period did not appear without precedent. Rather, the changes of this period were gradual, with a continuous history dating back towards the early twentieth century. Military families, as Grace Huxford's article suggests, experienced 'the cycle of reunion and separation' long before 1945, and military memories of the 'poor reception' for soldiers after the First World War fuelled anxieties following the Second. As Elisa Chuliá explains, legal restrictions on Spanish women's lives, likewise, preceded the entwined work of Franco and the Catholic Church and, especially, the male dominance in household finances had been included in civil legislation since at least 1889. Lindsey Earner-Bryne's article, similarly, shows how significant events from the 1930s – notably papal warnings about the family – continued to exert influence over debates into the late twentieth century. As Elisa Chuliá points out, such long-term analysis is especially significant for considering families: family dynamics,

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[39] Stokes, 'An Invasion of Guest Worker Children', 374–5.
[40] Ginsborg, 'The Politics of the Family', 444.

in particular, were shaped by intergenerational discussion, and social and class inheritance. In family life, also, the influence of 'war' has persisted long beyond the 'wartime' period and into 'peacetime', while the influence of sudden 'permissiveness', for example, has often not had an impact for many decades.

Nonetheless, certain features of the 'mid-to-late twentieth century' were distinct, and make it particularly ripe for analysis with regard to ideas of family, democracy and welfare. The mid-to-late twentieth century marked an unprecedented era of family separation through war, migration, evacuation, incarceration and genocide. For some families, this period also marked new periods of reunion. Because of this, families were constantly being mobilised and rethought, internally and externally, as political and social units. In this time, policy makers analysed throughout this collection pinned new hopes on subsequent generations of children to embody a distinctly 'new' or 'modern' sense of selfhood or leadership. Families were also continually renegotiating and redefining their own family systems, obligations and lives. In the context of family reunification for soldiers, Grace Huxford argues, they were 'learning familial dynamics anew'. Families had new opportunities for collective action together. Women and young people, also, had new opportunities to make visible the ways in which 'families' had wrought injustices upon their lives.

This collection proceeds with a broadly chronological structure, spanning different national case studies. As an opening and making use of oral history testimony, Elisa Chuliá's article analyses the everyday resistance of Spanish families in Francoist Spain. Chuliá argues that families were spaces of nurture and care, and also of resistance: mothers, in particular, used systems of education to empower their daughters for 'the future'. The second article is Grace Huxford's analysis of British military families in Cold War Germany. Focusing again on the 1950s, this piece highlights the ways in which these families resisted their projected roles as diplomats or models for a 'British way of life', mixing in complex and varied ways with new local communities. As such, the opening articles grapple with the aftermaths for family life and civil society following the Second World War. While war remains a significant spectre in Chuliá and Huxford's chapters, having increased the role of the state in family life and civil development, the chapters also show the role of family resistance to new professions and voluntary groups, organised around developing frameworks of nation such as national-populism and the East–West divide.

In the third article, Lauren Stokes considers emergent concerns in West Germany in the 1970s that a Spanish grandparent may not be a 'functional' and thus 'legitimate' family member. Spanish families in Stokes's account demonstrated 'agency' through voluntary action, although their actions were limited and oppressed by the political, legal and cultural systems in which they lived. Jennifer Crane, meanwhile, considers the ways in which families of so-called intellectually 'gifted' children in Britain were able to resist intervention from national conservative press and European voluntary agencies, particularly from the 1980s through the formation of activist groups and in everyday life – although activisms remained shaped by broad visions of what precocity and childhood should mean. In these types of activism from the 1970s and 1980s, consumerist models of living across Western Europe led to new economic and neoliberal definitions of the family, but families simultaneously used this new interest in individual rights to reassert the significance of their own models of happiness and well-being.

In the next article, Jonathyne Briggs traces the changing activism of families with autistic children in contemporary France. He pinpoints a shift, from the 1960s until the 1990s, in the nature of this activism, with parents moving from resistance to professionals towards collaboration. For Briggs, this case study reveals the power of 'the family' as an 'agent', but also the fragmented nature of its internal agency, as the preferences of parents have consistently overridden those of the young. In the final article, Lindsey Earner-Bryne analyses agency in the Irish family. She argues that until the 1980s the Irish family was 'still regarded as vital in shoring up the moral and social status quo'. From this decade, she states, 'the age of the inquiry', the family was made 'culpable for the moral cowardice of the nation', with unmarried mothers in particular a target of sustained professional violence.

Overall then, while looking across Europe, at diverse national contexts across a broad scope of time, this special issue teases out the contested and changing relationships between family, democracy and welfare in the mid-to-late twentieth century. Notably, it shows that families were not only objects of state governance and welfare, organised 'from above' in authoritarian, fascist and democratic states alike; rather, families renegotiated, reformed and reshaped the running of nation-states, their provision of welfare and their visions of equality and governance. Recognition of the family as an agent of change must be made central to our historical work. The growing power of the family tells new stories about the shifting power of social collectives, the changing cultural norms of generations and the relationships between economic and political structure, and individual life. These stories are, we hope, of interest to readers of *Contemporary European History*.