

WHATEVER HAPPENED TO HAJNAL'S LINE

›East-European‹ Family Patterns, Historical Context and New Developments

Texas Tech University (Lubbock)

Deadline for submissions:
November 1, 2010.

This special issue is scheduled for
2012.

Please submit your contributions to:
cristina.bradatan@ttu.edu (with ›For
JCFS issue‹ in the subject line).

Please allow at least 4-6 months
for the review process and editorial
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The Journal of Comparative Family Studies invites contributions for a special issue on the topic ››East-European‹ Family Patterns, Historical Context and New Developments‹‹.

More than forty years ago, John Hajnal introduced the notion of an ›European‹ pattern of marriage/household, characterized by high age at marriage, women and men working as servants before marriage and establishing their own households upon marriage. He called this pattern ›European‹ for brevity, although it applies only to the Northwestern Europe, west of an imaginary line connecting ›Leningrad‹ (Saint Petersburg) to Trieste.

Interestingly enough, Hajnal's line followed quite closely the Iron Curtain, then dividing Europe into capitalist and socialist societies. As Churchill put it in a speech he gave at Westminster College, Missouri, in 1946, an iron curtain has descended after the World War II ››from Stettin in the Baltic to Trieste in the Adriatic‹‹. Within a larger context of ideas, the 1950s–1960s were the times when Rostov's theory of modernization was quite popular in the academic world. Hajnal's line brought to life the older Weberian idea that the West is somehow different (in this case, in terms of family formation patterns) and it might very well be that the other regions of the world would not follow a similar route, anytime soon, simply because their history followed a different path.

Although the notion of a ›Western‹ as opposed to ›Eastern‹ type of family is currently related to Hajnal's work, his research relied on the studies coming from the Cambridge Group for the Population History, and, in particular, from Peter Laslett and Peter Czap. Eastern European countries, falling East of the Hajnal's line, were characterized as having a non-European household formation system. The concept of an ›European pattern‹ of family formation remained popular over the years, to such an extent that even today a Google search returns more than 11,000 hits for this concept.

In the meantime, however, a series of political, social and economic changes affected Eastern Europe and the whole notion of a Western versus Eastern type of household/family seems to have taken a different path. First, in his earliest article on the topic (1965), Hajnal defined this pattern as unstable, since he saw the post-WWII Europe as moving toward an earlier age at (and high rates of) marriage. Secondly, studies on Eastern European countries initially excluded from the ›European‹ marriage group yielded unexpected results. Multi-generation households are a rarity in these countries (Botev, 1990) and age at marriage presents high variation between different regions of Eastern Europe (Sklar, 1974), making it difficult to simply divide Europe into an ›European‹ and ›Non-European‹ type of household. Thirdly, Ruggles (2009) using data from 97 historical and contemporary censuses, argues that, when variables such as demographic structure and level of agricultural employment are taken into account, the ›Western‹ family pattern does not seem to be an exceptional case anymore.

This special issue proposes a discussion of the validity of an ›Eastern‹ versus ›Western‹ type of family as a distinct analytic category in family studies in Europe. Specifically, we seek to address, among others, the following questions:

- How useful is this distinction nowadays within the European context?
- Does history continue to play an important role in shaping the household and family characteristics in Eastern as opposed to Western Europe?
- Is there (has ever been) an Eastern European pattern of family?
- Do countries from Eastern Europe have a common family pattern?
- How are they different from the Western European ones?
- How does history shape family systems in Eastern Europe?
- How have the post-1990s changes affected the family ties in these countries?
- How relevant is Hajnal's line today?

Rather than separate case studies, a comparative (in terms of time span, between countries of the region or in comparison with other regions) and interdisciplinary perspective is preferred. For the purposes of this special issue, Eastern Europe is considered to include Albania, Bulgaria, Czech Republic, East Germany, Hungary, Poland, Romania, Slovakia, and former Yugoslavian countries.