

Moritz Föllmer. *Sehnsucht nach Nähe: Interpersonale Kommunikation in Deutschland seit dem 19. Jahrhundert.* Stuttgart: Franz Steiner Verlag, 2004. 243 S. EUR 40.00, cloth, ISBN 978-3-515-08370-6.



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Moritz Föllmer has edited a volume that, at its best, is highly stimulating. It is mainly based on papers from a conference, "Austauschbeziehungen. Interpersonale Kommunikation im 19. und 20. Jahrhundert" held in Göttingen in 2002. Chapters from Andrew Stuart Bergerson and Sandrine Kott were added later and for good reason. Kott's analysis of interpersonal communication in the GDR adds a particularly valuable contribution to the overarching theme of the book.

Interpersonal communication is a theoretical construct that relates to two important historical discussions of the last forty years. Whereas studies inspired by Reinhart Koselleck, Jürgen Habermas, Thomas Nipperdey, and Lothar Gall have paid ample attention to the institutions that mediate between state and individual--associations, clubs, and masonic lodges--more recent studies by Anne-Charlott Trepp and Rebekka Habermas have pointed out the gendered microstructures between private intimacy and semi-official (men's) clubs. Family circles, friendships, and women's get-togethers provided in late eighteenth-century and early nineteenth-century Germany the infrastructure for social orientation:

what William Reddy has called the navigation of feelings.

Trepp and Habermas's findings are the point of departure for this book. In his ambitious introduction, Föllmer agrees with Anthony Giddens, Ervin Goffman, Niklas Luhmann, and Jürgen Habermas that interpersonal communication does not disappear in the process of modernization. But it changes and the factors of this change can be located in changing norms (p. 20), behavioral patterns (p. 21), the rise of market society (p. 23), new means of communication and transportation (p. 27) and the rise (or failure) of modern democracy (p. 29). As a result, argues Föllmer, "interpersonal communication in Germany since the nineteenth century was essentially determined by desire to retain in modern society the manageability of close personal relationships (*Näheverhältnisse*)" (p. 43).

Föllmer's introduction, the most interesting and stimulating portion of the volume, makes a bold effort to create a periodization for a history of interpersonal communication between 1750 and 1990. Considering the theme and some of the substantive discoveries of the volume it is, howev-

er, disappointing to see the authors follow the classical periodization of modernization theory by setting transitions in the years 1871, 1914, 1933, and 1945. Their findings indicate something else: interpersonal relationships show a tremendous tenacity to resist the transforming pressures of modern society. Armin Owzar's exploration of the culture of silence in Wilhelminian Germany and the establishment of separate, enclosed communicative milieus (among Catholics, Social Democrats, and so on) in the 1880s prompts the findings of Daniel Morat who in his stimulating analysis studies the efforts of Ernst and Friedrich Georg Janger, Carl Schmitt, Martin Heidegger, and other right-wing intellectuals to form esoteric and enclosed circles of communication and the ways in which these forms influenced their intellectual styles. Frank Busch's study of Adenauer and his successors' political styles reveals a great deal of persistence of older patterns of interpersonal communication. Obviously this continuity should yield a different periodization than the one dictated by modernization theory.

Another interesting feature of this volume is its effort to open perspectives of historical study onto fields rarely explored in the history of modern Germany. Tobias Kies's opening chapter on rumors in early nineteenth-century Baden is one of these. According to Kies, rumors were not pathological but means of coping with everyday life, thus constituting a potential for social protest against the authorities that controlled the flow of information. This potential for *Eigensinn* (stubbornness) is also a theme in Andrew Stuart Bergerson's lengthy exploration of what he calls the National Socialists' desire for *reformatio vitae*. Bergerson tries to open a discussion of the ways Jews and Gentiles interacted during the crucial years of the mid-1930s by exploring the casual encounter of a Jewish youth group and non-Jewish hunters in a forest near Hildesheim. The incident, though suggestive, falls short of providing enough material for Bergerson's highly theoretical and occasionally self-reflective analysis. Similarly,

Moritz Fullmer's own study on suicide as communication in the Weimar Republic falls slightly short of its promise to show how suicides reveal what Fullmer calls the communicative crisis of the 1920s. His case studies of the generation gap and the failures of teachers to create adequate means and lines of communication invite readers, however, to explore further the prevalent cultural conflicts of the 1920s. Important and good studies, although less suitable for the theme of the book, are Habbo Knoch's theoretical reconstruction of Simmel's theory of communication and Anke Bahl's reflections on online communication.

Ruth Rosenberger's study on the rise of modern industrial and managerial psychology in post-1945 Germany is one of the most intriguing analyses of this collection. Rosenberger argues, in accordance with modernization theory, that German companies slowly adopted modern methods of workplace communication by abandoning hierarchical strategies of talk and increasing dialogue between management and workers. Sandrine Kott's study takes its departure from the customary East German grouching (*meckern*). By tracing the continuous decline in meaningful political communication in the GDR after the 1950s, Kott discovers the rise of this highly private and apolitical strategy of expressing one's discomfort. This is a short and instructive social history of complaint.

Overall, the authors have produced an important and stimulating book. They have taken the discussion of the historical underpinnings of our interpersonal communication to a new level.

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