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in the Humanities & Social Sciences

Isabel Heinemann. *Inventing the Modern American Family: Family Values and Social Change in 20th Century United States.* Frankfurt am Main: Campus Verlag, 2012. 335 p. ISBN 978-3-593-39640-8.

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Published on H-Soz-u-Kult (December, 2012)

Ever since the early Puritan period in 17th-century America, the family has been a central concept in understanding U.S.-American society. Over the centuries, representations of the nuclear family in fiction and the visual arts as well as in academic publications have multiplied. Therefore, it may seem surprising to see yet another collection of essays on the market, focusing on the 20th-century U.S.-American family. The volume, edited by Isabel Heinemann in the context of an Emmy Noether Junior Research Group at Münster University, contains a number of essays by members of this group as well as by internationally renowned historians. In her introduction, Heinemann rightly points out that "[a]lthough the historical works on the social history of the American family are legion, almost no study deals with the entire 20th century" (p. 8). This is the gap the current volume sets out to fill. Furthermore, the volume attempts to balance the (traditional) focus on white middle-class families through the inclusion of African American and Mexican American family concepts.

The first of four sections, "Building the Nation: The American Family," consists of three contributions with a focus on women's roles in families. Simon Wendt's highly lucid essay elaborates on the concept of "woman" held by the Daughters of the American Revolution (DAR), a group founded in 1890 and known for its patriotic emphasis on women's contributions to the American Revolution. Paradoxically, as Wendt points out, in spite of this focus, the DAR opposed "the various challenges to traditional notions of gender that characterized the first half of the twentieth century" (p. 32) such as feminism and the New Woman and, ever since, has perpetuated a "'hegemonic masculinity'" (p. 36) and the view of the nation as "a natural extension of the family" (p. 37). In contrast, Claudia Roesch's article singles out Mexican Americans as an ethnic group and presents mothers of this group as catalysts of Americanization programs which were essential in making immigrants American citizens. In contrast to the white model of the isolated nuclear family, "the Mexican ideal included an extended family and fictive kinship through godparenthood" (pp. 60-61), as Roesch exemplifies, but "deviant notions of moth-

erhood were pathologized by the Americanizers" (p. 61). Mothers, as Roesch goes on to argue, "were considered the singular transmitter of values" and, therefore, "made responsible for social problems such as worker unrest and juvenile delinquency" (p. 73). Ultimately, the Americanization programs of the 1920s were clearly intended to "assimilate Mexican immigrant families to a concept of family that was marked as white and middle-class" (p. 80). Barbara Antoniazzi's contribution picks up an aspect of this concept and engages with the phenomenon of "social maternalism," defined as "a mode of political agency that characterized the female impact on politics well into the twentieth century" (p. 83) and that was visible in the struggle for temperance, civil rights, and social reform. The essay reveals how immigrant women used their (life) narratives to redefine the concept of family and a woman's place in society and, thus, also the idea of New Womanhood.

Section II on "Social Experts and the American Family" brings together two essays on masculine health and women's reproduction respectively. While the table of contents suggests that the first of the two essays in this section will discuss 20th-century America, the actual article by Tracy Penny Light focuses on a 1950s phenomenon, namely the contradiction between men's health and related studies reported to and made public by the American Medical Association. Light points to the fact that "historically the medical profession and medical science were central in shaping gender roles" (p. 107) and, therefore, were also instrumental in the formation of 1950s fatherhood. "Healthy fatherhood," as Light argues, "was a paradox" (p. 109) because "the Type A man (a hard-working, achievement-oriented and responsible provider) became the dominant construct of masculinity prevalent in the United States in the 1950s" (p. 117), but was also the main cause of men's illnesses, as cardiologists pointed out. Isabel Heinemann's well-informed contribution then discusses the relationship between social experts and modern women's reproduction. Similar to the late 19th century, in the late 1950s debates emerged once more that saw women's reproduction threatened by women's participation in the workforce and thus turning "individual family values and private reproductive choices into a national problem" (p. 125). Through social-expert discourses, Heinemann locates a shift from blaming a fertility decline on women in the workforce via a 1960s abortion debate to a more global (and possibly racially charged) perspective.

Sections III ("Failing Parents and Problematic Youth") and IV ("Fatherhood/Motherhood and the Media") focus on the "child-parent-unit" (p. 25) as an aspect of the ideal American family. Anne Overbeck analyzes African American motherhood and the phenomenon of the "Crack Baby Crisis" as hysteria enforced by the media in the 1980s and 1990s and spreading the vision of (mostly African American) women using crack and giving birth to children with birth defects. As Overbeck argues, it was "not only the well-being of the infants born to drug[-]abusing mothers" that people saw in danger, but, above all, "the financial, biological and moral well-being of the American nation as such" (p. 156). Catherine E. Rymph's essay narrows down the issue of fatherhood to the specific case of foster care and works out how, in the 1950s and 1960s, healthy fatherhood was deemed essential for the American family and, thus, for the nation. Nina Mackert scrutinizes the "delinquency scare in the 1950s" (198), which blamed bad parenting for its emergence. Mackert shows that delinquency in the 1950s referenced a "racialized gang-boy" from disorganized inner-city life (p. 218) while "youthful, white, middle-class, masculine rebellion" (p. 218) was appreciated as critical of "conformist assimilation" (p. 218).

Section IV shifts to media presentations of family and motherhood/fatherhood. Jürgen Martschukat focuses on African American families, black fatherhood after the Civil Rights Movement, and on the intersection of gender, race, and

class. He analyzes Charles Burnett's film "***Killer of Sheep***" (1977), in which the African American protagonist Stan's family life reveals that, on the one hand, traditional roles of the father as the breadwinner and the mother as the home maker are confirmed, and that, on the other hand, hard work is not enough to overcome race and class barriers in American society. Olaf Stieglitz's contribution underscores the relevance of the family during the 1950s Red Scare. He shows how the (image of the) nuclear American family was used by anti-Communist forces to fight against Communism. Families, because they "supposedly formed the backbone of U.S. society" (p. 247), were more easily threatened by Communist invasion. As Stieglitz's analysis suggests, the film "***My Son John*** " (1952) "argues for defending the nuclear family and all it stands for: American values, 'traditional' gender roles, 'bulwark' against anything that might be considered un-American" (pp. 263-64). Such a conservative stance on family in the 1950s was countered by the later "pluralization of family forms" (p. 266) and a decrease in traditional family structures from the 1960s to the 1990s, as Andre Dechert argues in his essay on the family man and fatherhood as represented in the sitcom "***Home Improvement***" (1991-99) and as debated in society at the same time. Dechert proceeds to analyze the reception of this series through closely engaging with reviews published in the American mainstream press. However, as he concludes, "the notion of the ideal isolated nuclear family remained mostly unaltered" (p. 288).

Overall, this is an impressive and highly informative collection of essays on the 20th-century U.S.-American family. The contributions offer an abundance of interesting facts and analyses of the historical development of the family and family values and show how concepts of family and nation strongly intersect. The book would have profited from cross-references between the essays since several of them touch upon very similar phenomena. An almost exhaustive bibliography promises further research possibilities. Apart from occasional language inconsistencies as well as the unfortunate absence of the definite article in the title, the volume is well edited. It clearly enhances our understanding of U.S.-American concepts of family and makes the American Studies community look forward to additional output, especially with regard to ethnic issues, by this Münster University research group.

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Citation: Carmen Birkle. Review of Heinemann, Isabel. *Inventing the Modern American Family: Family Values and Social Change in 20th Century United States.* H-Soz-u-Kult, H-Net Reviews. December, 2012.

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