The Dissolution of the Family.
A Consequence of Misinterpretation?

Theresa Veith

8811156820

Theresa.Veith.016@student.lu.se

Supervisor: Magnus Ring

VT 2012

Abstract

Author: Theresa Veith

Title: The Dissolution of the Family. A Consequence of Misinterpretation?

SIMV10 Master's thesis (30 credits) in Global Studies, VT 2012

Lund University Department of Sociology Division

Supervisor: Magnus Ring

Problem/background: Even though individualizing tendencies can be dated back at least to the industrial revolution, the 1950s and 1960s are understood as a climax of the process due to the emergence of certain opportunities. Mainly because of individualization, characterized by the emphasis on self-fulfilment and impersonality for instance, a general apprehension towards a dissolving family has risen.

Objective: The aim of this research is to investigate whether this apprehension is valid. This is conducted through two different approaches, i.e. an implementation of the relativist perspective and a historical analysis. A comparison of three concepts since the 1980s not only demonstrates a change or no change in the understanding of family in recent years, but also a potential variety of perspectives. The investigation is based on the assumption that as long as pro-familial concepts exist, the suggestion of dissolution of the family can be rendered obsolete on a general basis. The research not only examines the dissolution of the family but also the power of the relativist perspective to reject certain concepts.

First the relativist perspective is presented followed by a demonstration of the theoretical framework of the research, i.e. the individualization theory. The investigation then offers an insight into the historical background, namely post-war modernism, and a characterization of reflexive modernization, which constitutes the examined time frame. After a clarification of the methodological procedure and the actual comparison the outcome is refined by empirical data, which consists of the understanding of family by individuals themselves.

Conclusion/result: The individualization process has caused an expansion of the term family, which increasingly included non-familial persons as well. However, the term still involves the family of origin, which consequently has neither dissolved nor experienced a decrease in value.

Keywords: family, individualization theory, relativist perspective, reflexive modernization

I thank my family
that not even one moment
during my research
was shaped by doubt.
I know I am very lucky.

Content

1 Introduction

As will be illustrated throughout this research, particularly since the industrial revolution in the 18th and 19th century, and also since a very significant phase of globalization, a general apprehension of a dissolving family has risen in the West. The industrial revolution and globalization lead to an increased separation of family and employment on a geographical basis. This is due to several improvements such as in the transportation and communication systems.[1] Before the industrial revolution and with the unity of family and employment, family held a rather important position due to the high degree of dependence among family members. It was further understood to include an extended family; a family consisting of several blood relatives in different generations, all unified by one place, usually governed by a patriarchal head.[2] With this family picture in the minds it is quite logical that family is frequently understood as dissolving. Not only direct observations but also official statistics support this trend. In 2010 only 1% of all German households consisted of three generations, i.e. children, parents and grandparents. Single-households constituted 40,2%, compared to 20,6% in 1961. The quantity of marriages has been steadily decreasing since the beginning of the 1960s whereas the number of divorces is increasing.[3] Also the percentage of childless women has continuously increased in the last decades.[4]

The change of the family structure has an impact on familial ideas in general. Humans tend to be quite prone to nostalgia. The idea is frequently shared that people were more family-centered, more selfless, in previous generations. This can be a consequence of retrospective idealization[5]. Hence, temporal distance leads to vague memory, which consequently suggests that the current situation is perceived as the worst as yet. In the 20th and 21st century the impairment is primarily explained through a shift in values, particularly towards other people.[6] This shift characterizes the individualization process, which can be dated back to the implementation of the individualism term for the purpose of societal analysis through Alexis

---

[1] Mau 2007, p.27
[2] Filser 1978, pp.42
[3] Destatis
[4] Destatis 2012, p.28
[5] Schröder 2010, p.113
[6] Inglehart 1977

de Tocqueville in 1835[7], and whose features and consequences were expatiated by a vast amount of scientific and non-scientific persons since.

This research aims at investigating the concept of individualization in detail, with a particular focus on its consequences on the development of social relationships of individuals and here especially of the family. It furthermore intends to inspect whether a rise of substitute families can be observed which increasingly replace the family of origin in its functions and diminish the value of the latter. These objectives among others lead to the following main research question of the here presented thesis:

> *"Can the theory of the dissolving priority of family for the individual be seen as a consequence of misinterpretation or is it supported by scientific research?"*

The term "family" can be separated into two dimensions, namely the emotional and structural, and is defined in more detail for the purpose of the paper in chapter 1.2.

The main aim is to investigate the following hypothesis:

> *"Even though modernization facilitates individualization, this process does not necessarily diminish the priority of family for the individual. The concept of the dissolving family misses the relevance of the emotional dimension which impedes the replaceability of the family."*

The book "Risk Society" released in 1986 by Ulrich Beck poses one of the starting points of a new era in sociology, which he calls reflexive modernization[8]. It can be understood as a dividing line between individualizing, self-fulfilling trends and a move "back to the roots". As will be shown later, particularly the immediate post-WWII atmosphere was characterized by emancipative desires, whose consequences caused the emergence of this new era. To investigate both, the consequences of the emancipative desires and the features of reflexive modernization is one aim of the paper, based on the idea that the change in thought could have had an impact on the perception of familial processes as well.

Even though Ulrich Beck's point of view on society, demonstrated mainly in the third and fifth chapter, earned both a lot of critique and support in the last fifteen years, the various theories have one characteristic in common: according to all of them post-war processes did

---

[7] Kalupner 2003, p.23
[8] Beck 1986

bring forward several insecurities that need to be overcome in some way.[9] Whether this results in the dissolution or the strengthening of the family needs to be examined.

The main personal aim behind this thesis is that I crave to find an answer not only to a question, but to an opinion that slumbers in many of us. I hope that in the end I can reduce our fear of contemporary circumstances making us a lonely crowd[10].

1.1 Outline

The second chapter is devoted to the theoretical framework. It not only illustrates the main theory the research is based on, namely individualization theory, but also relates the concept back to sociological classics, such as Ferdinand Tönnies and Georg Simmel.

The third chapter relates to the main historical background the thesis is based on. It presents both the post-WWII atmosphere with a special focus on the 1950s and 1960s and reflexive modernity. The special focus on post-war modernism comes from the finding that this time frame is considered a climax related to individualism and the change in family concepts, or at least the understanding of the priority of family. According to Göran Therborn it was at this time, and therefore a relative short phase, where family and life in general were shaped by homogenization and standardization.[11] The demonstrations in this chapter are necessary in order to put the investigated time frame, i.e. the time since the beginning of reflexive modernization, into context and, as a result, to understand it better.

The fourth chapter first treats the perspective from which the research is conducted, the relativist perspective, with a main focus on the life world concept characterized by Jürgen Habermas amongst others. It then explains the methodology – including research design, strategy and case selection – which will be used for the purpose of finding an answer to the research question. Within this chapter the research is also contextualized geographically and chronologically to prevent potential vagueness.

The fifth chapter offers an insight into a selected number of theories on family since the emergence of reflexive modernization, which are worth mentioning in relation to the topic due to the fact that they have expanded the concept by introducing new perspectives. It first presents an overview of Beck's individualization theory followed by an illustration of concepts developed by Steffen Mau and Hans Bertram, and a comparison among those three.

---

[9] Kalupner 2003, p.206
[10] Denney et al. 1955
[11] Therborn 2005, p.237

This chapter presents how family was either understood the same or differently by various sociologists in their scientific research since the 1980s and also whether the rise of substitute families can be observed. If globalization and industrialization really produced individualism in the way it was understood in post-war theories, and if the concept is true that the world is becoming more and more globalized, then this would consequently indicate that the more globalized the world, the more individualized the people and the less priority to traditional relationships, i.e. family relationships. The chapter investigates whether there is some logic behind this linearity by comparing concepts with the same focus established at different times. If the idea of the dissolving family seems stronger in the investigated theories of the more recent years, this does not necessarily imply that the dissolving family actually is occurring, but merely that the idea is also supported by recent scientific opinion. This chapter only compares theory and not actuality. A difference in thought does not necessarily testify to an actual change.

In the sixth chapter the theoretical findings of the fifth chapter are refined by empirical observations, based on a qualitative questioning. This offers an insight into how individuals themselves define and interpret family and as a result into how valid conceptualizations on society can be perceived.

The conclusion in the end of the research provides an answer to the research question and consequently states whether the proposed hypothesis can be supported. If it cannot be supported, a new hypothesis will be generated. The conclusion also serves to illustrate personal remarks in relation to the topic and the research.

1.2 Definitions

The terms "family" and "substitute family" are characterized here for the purpose of the paper in order to overcome potential vagueness and to enable a shared basis. Also, the concepts "globalization" and "modernization" are illustrated as they are considered the main fundament of the individualization process.

1.2.1   Definition of Family

According to Nave-Herz a "family" is characterized by reproducing and socializing functions, a differentiation of generations, and relationships based on cooperation and solidarity.[12] However, the understanding of the term not only in relation to this research but also in

---

[12] Nave-Herz 2004, p.25

relation to contemporary society in general is far more complex. Whereas Nave-Herz's definition focuses mainly on the composition of a family, with a main emphasis on the reproducing function, the definition for the purpose of the paper intends at illuminating its restricted significance in relation to predominant family structures. In consideration of a change in familial processes this research highlights the importance of the emotional aspects of Nave-Herz's definition, such as the socializing function and the cooperation and solidarity. Consequently, composition and blood relationship are not considered essential features. The reason blood relationship does not pose a main relevance is for instance that some people are adopted or raised by a family other than the one they originated from. One of the main reasons why there is no essence in generational differentiation lies in the idea that somebody could have lost his/her parents or grandparents or that the relationship to the parents has been cut off, which does not necessarily diminish the value of the relationship to siblings, cousins, or whatever relationship the person refers to as his/her main family.

Even though blood relationship and generational variation are not considered as mandatory features of this definition, family is still understood in terms of family of origin. This suggests that if blood relationship is not given the definition is based on the socializing function, referring to those who guide the child from the dependent into its independent life, which constitutes a crucial phase.

1.2.2   Definition of Substitute Family

"Substitute Family" in this research describes the emergence of family-like structures as a consequence of individualization in a globalized world, where original family members are increasingly geographically fragmented and replaced mainly by geographically close people. The latter ought to fill in the gaps produced by the absence of the actual family members. Those new family structures consequently are supposed to grant security for the individual, which was initially provided by the traditional family, whatever form the latter resembled. The term not only implies the development of a new family-like structure but also the decrease in importance of the original family due to its replacement. Substitute Families could for instance be found in peer groups, but also in family-like structures, including intergenerational contacts and the hint of the shape of a traditional family. In addition, the formation of a new family, e.g. through marriage/partnership and/or parenthood, can be understood as a substitute family, but only if it results in a replacement of and a decrease in the importance of the family of origin on an emotional basis.

This family type differs from the family as presented before mainly in the fact that the substitute family is formed based on personal choice. It is consequently chosen by the individual to fulfill what the term signifies, namely the substitution of the original family. This suggests that the individual actively triggers its emergence because he/she expects advantages - either on an emotional or economic basis, or both - from the new bonds which he or she cannot receive (anymore) from the family of origin. Even though this family model is based on personal choice, the active behavior does not necessarily imply consciousness.

Whether the presented substitute families are actually emerging, which would signify the replaceability of the family of origin, ought to be investigated here as one of the potential causes for or consequences of a dissolving family, in case such a process can be observed. In order to investigate this, both the reasoning of the sociologists, which ought to be compared, and of the sample, which is questioned in the end of the research, will be analyzed. If no decrease in value can be detected, the idea of the substitute family as a replacement of the family of origin becomes obsolete.

1.2.3   Globalization and Modernization

The term globalization is often related to a process quite opposite to the meaning of global. Global refers to the entire globe, so to say to something big. But globalization is a process where the world, namely the globe, becomes small.[13] A process where everywhere becomes nowhere and everybody becomes nobody.

Globalization is one of the main consequences of industrialization. The transition from agrarian to industrial society, which was triggered mainly by modernization of machinery, not only brought forward a change in work processes but also a separation of home and place of employment. As a result working colleagues and family members were not necessarily overlapping anymore.[14] Not only did the concepts of work, spare time, employment etc. change, but in general geographical distances increasingly dissolved due to improvements in transportation and communication systems. It became normal that members of the same family worked at geographically distant places. Globalization facilitated the opportunity to grow up in England and later work in Denmark for instance. Occurrences like this became frequent instead of being an exception. The world became more and more interconnected;

---

[13] Shaw 2000, p.9-12
[14] Butler

borders more and more inexistent (in the sense of possibility).[15] According to Shaw, "society has been globalized not because human beings thought or acted globally, but because in pursuit of other ends – profit, power, communication – worldwide connectedness has developed." [16]

Sklair differentiates between three spheres in which the global system can be organized: economic, political and culture-ideology. The above demonstrated characteristics of globalization represent an economical point of view, which constitutes the perspective from which globalization is observed and characterized primarily.[17] However, the process did bring forward a vast amount of non-economic consequences as well, such as the change in societal structures brought forward by the shift in dependencies.

In order to emphasize the non-economic consequences, Ulrich Beck differentiates between "globalization" and "cosmopolitism". He considers globalization a one-dimensional process which focuses mainly on the market. As a result he introduces the term "cosmopolitism" to cover the remaining dimensions and defines it through the development of multiple loyalties, the rise of differentiated transnational ways of living, and the decrease in state power, which is replaced by non-state agents.[18] Given the nature of this research project, which focuses mostly on the societal consequences of economic processes, relating to globalization in Beck's cosmopolitan terms seems to offer a very appropriate basis. Consequently, whenever the term globalization is used again, it will always be understood in the sense of cosmopolitism, i.e. as a multidimensional process.

1.3 Contribution to the Field

Even though the idea of the dissolving family has been treated to a great extent, the hitherto existing approaches differ from the here demonstrated in the following aspects:

The main novelty of this research is the introduction of a new relationship model, namely the substitute family. The focus therefore not only lies on the change in the importance of family for the individual, but also whether in a geographically fragmented world the family is replaced by new constellations, i.e. that non-familial people, which for the most part are geographically close to the individual, take over the family functions.

---

[15] Mau 2007, pp.27-30
[16] Shaw 2000, p.11
[17] Sklair 2008, p.62
[18] Beck 2004, p.18

Furthermore, this research is not based on actuality but on theory, and only refined by empirical investigation. Most research, which tries to investigate the dissolution of the family, first presents existing theories and afterwards either dismisses or supports those by empirical investigation. In contrast, the here presented research aims at proving the legitimacy of those concepts, which suggest the dissolution of the family, based on the relativist perspective. To be more precise, the research is based on the assumption that all theories, which suggest dissolution of the family, can be proven wrong as long as a pro-familial perspective in relation to persistence exists. This is supposed to illustrate the power of the relativist perspective, considering that only its implementation can enable a falsification of theories.

Taking these arguments into account, testing the existence of change by investigating the existence of differences in theoretical conceptualizations and predictions at both similar and diverging moments seems not only quite appropriate and legitimate but also one of the most useful methods in order to answer the research question.

2   Theoretical Framework

As becomes visible through research in the field, the better part of post-war family conceptualizations is based on individualization theory. This illustrates the centrality of the theory in relation to the topic and as a result the importance of its demonstration for the purpose of the paper.

This chapter first offers a general definition of the individualization theory followed by a demonstration of the characterizations and interpretations of the process by sociological classics, such as Tönnies, Durkheim, Simmel and Weber, which enables an insight into its beginnings and a basis for the understanding of its development.

2.1 Individualization Theory

According to Mark Hutter, "Modernization theories have been widely used in sociology since World War II. (…) The concept of modernization and the theories stemming from its conceptualization have been the dominating perspective in the analysis of global social change and the family."[19] One of the main theories stemming from the concept of modernization, which is considered a main trigger in relation to the change in family concepts, is the individualization theory.

This suggests the centrality of the theory not only in sociology in general but also in matters of sociological family conceptualizations. Consequently, this centrality will be addressed both by illustrating the characteristics of the theory and by demonstrating the relevance of the individualization process to the theories of sociological classics such as Durkheim and Tönnies.

In contemporary German research the theory on individualization which is mainly used is Beck's definition in his book "Risk Society", released in 1986. As will be illustrated more detailed in the fourth chapter, this research focuses on concepts produced by German sociologists, which legitimates the use of Beck's definition. According to him modernization led to a ternary individualization: liberation of historical social bonds (liberation dimension), loss of traditional securities (disenchantment dimension), and new types of social integration (reintegration dimension).[20] This definition suggests two different modes of individualization:

---

[19] Hutter 1981, p.45
[20] Beck 1986, p.206

first that the individual was increasingly able to make his/her own decisions, and second, that this is relative in the sense that the individual was embedded in certain institutions containing rules and expectations, which constrain individual decisions. Abels labels these two modes as duality of liberation and institutionalization.[21] The latter mode is what constitutes the novelty of reflexive modernization towards immediate post-war modernism, namely the observation of constraints and negative side-effects of modernization, which will be further elaborated in the third chapter.

2.2 Sociological Classics on Individualization

The illustration of a selected number of sociological classics, which brought forward concepts in relation to modernization, individualization and their societal consequences, will be given here not only to address the centrality of the individualization process in sociology, but also to enable a general insight into the concept and some potential characterizations and interpretations of it.

2.2.1   Ferdinand Tönnies

Ferdinand Tönnies, born in 1855, not only was a German sociologist and philosopher, but also a co-founder of the German Society for Sociology.[22] In 1887 he published his work "Gemeinschaft und Gesellschaft", meaning "community and society", in which he characterized and opposed those two concepts - which are supposed to resemble ideal types[23] as implemented by Max Weber - by presenting the following dichotomies amongst others: acquaintance and strangeness, sympathy and antipathy, trust and distrust, attachment and freedom, etc. Also the distinction between "Wesenwille" (natural will) and "Kürwille" (rational will) originated. The natural will is influenced by inherited thought and emotion whereas the rational will is controlled by thinking and understands subconscious motives as disturbing factors. In each of the presented dichotomies the first feature characterizes community and the second society. According to Tönnies, community is based on natural relationships, which he explained through family relationships, characterized by the existence of goodwill, trust and shared values. Society on the other hand is based on social

---

[21] Abels 2007, pp.357
[22] Uni Graz
[23] Weber 1984, p.22

relationships, or more precise contractual relationships, which are characterized by tradeoffs.[24]

As can be observed here, Tönnies perceived society rather pessimistically, assigning it several negative characteristics. Even though he did not label the triggers for the shift as globalization, modernization or industrialization, considering the moment of the release of his work, i.e. right within the ongoing industrialization process, his conceptualization can be understood as a reaction to those processes and their consequences, considering that predominantly industrialization affected the transition from community to society. Therefore, the terms that are used nowadays were just emerging at that time and as a result not prevalent. However, Tönnies did refer to individualism – a term introduced for the purpose of societal analysis by Toqueville in 1835[25] - as the main characteristic of civic society, which he considered the most distinctive shape of society. Tönnies did not understand individualism as the diminishing of social life as such, but rather of the collective social life, which was replaced by a novel form of interaction, i.e. civic society, based on new needs and wants and unified by the state instead of by traditional bonds.[26]

Max Weber adopted Tönnies' dichotomy "Gemeinschaft und Gesellschaft", but translated it into a process, namely "Vergemeinschaftung und Vergesellschaftung", which means "collectivization and socialization".[27] He defined the first term as a social relationship, in which the social action is based on subjectively sensed togetherness whereas the second process bases its social action on rationally motivated balance of interests. As can be observed here, both Tönnies and Weber understood community as something positive, emotional and cozy, based on affiliation. In contrast, society was based on pure interest, mainly economic interest to be more precise, and therefore negatively connoted.

Summing up Tönnies' attitude towards individualization can be interpreted as a rather dismissive one, taking into account his emphasis on the importance of community/family for the individual and his assignment of several negative characteristics to society.

---

[24] Tönnies 1959, p.180-191
[25] Kalupner 2003, p.23
[26] Tönnies 1959, p.191
[27] Weber 1984, p.69

2.2.2   Georg Simmel

Georg Simmel was born in 1858 in Berlin and studied history, ethnic psychology, philosophy and history of art, which all influenced his sociological thinking. In 1908 he released his work "Soziologie. Untersuchung über die Formen der Vergesellschaftung" in which he was very much concerned with the dialectic between individuality and societal restraint. According to Simmel, individuality as a consequence of modern society depends on the following factors amongst others: size of the group the individual orients itself at, quantity and differentiation of social circles the individual is embedded in, money (as a bearer of impersonal relationships) and geographical expansion. He presented a certain causality, claiming that the higher the demonstrated factors, the greater the individuality of the person. Also, he addressed the interdependency of individuality and freedom in the sense that individuality resembles freedom from social control which the individual has to fight for.[28]

Simmel considered the increase in group sizes as a main triggering factor for individualism, which can be explained through the at that time already ongoing modernizing and globalizing trends. The geographical expansion of a person not only leads to an expansion of his/her group of affiliation but also to an increase of the quantity of those groups, which Simmel calls social circles. The more social circles a person is embedded in, the less social control he/she is exposed to.[29]

The fact that Simmel considered individualism as freedom shows not only positive connotation despite impersonality but also suggests that he understood individualism as an opportunity for a person to realize his/her potential. However, Simmel also addresses the dilemma of societal restraint, which even in modern society constitutes a barrier for making use of this potential for freedom.

Even though Simmel and Tönnies characterized similar dichotomies in relation to the consequences of modernization, they do differ significantly in how they interpret individualism. What Tönnies considered as a negative side-effect of modernization was perceived precisely reversed by Simmel. What the one sociologist understood as a threat was realized to be an opportunity by the other, which already suggests the importance of differences in interpretation whenever it comes to the generalizations of concepts.

---

[28] Simmel 1908; Münch 2002, p.228-234
[29] Simmel 1908, p.403-453

2.2.3   Emile Durkheim

The sociologist and ethnologist Emile Durkheim was born in 1858 in Epinal, France. According to Durkheim social differentiation as a principal of emerging modern societies not only influenced economy but all areas of life. He was therefore interested in how this differentiation was related to integration and individualization.[30]

Social differentiation was understood as a consequence of specialization which became necessary due to the growth of society. He differentiates between two kinds of solidarity, mechanic and organic. The first one is characterized by intimate contact, shared environment and norms, and collective consciousness. The second by the interaction of diverse people based on specialization, which share abstract collective consciousness and ideas, and norms which rest on contract. Following Durkheim the more specialization, the less mechanic and the more organic solidarity.[31]

Considering the demonstration of the characteristics of the two solidarities, a comparison to Tönnies' natural and rational will can be drawn, whereas mechanic solidarity would resemble the natural will and organic solidarity the rational will.

For Durkheim the transition from mechanic to organic solidarity brought forward the process of individualization and therefore resembles Max Weber's "Vergesellschaftung", which Durkheim characterized through the emergence of an autonomous subject whose individual consciousness exceeds its collective one.[32]

In 1879 he released his work "Le suicide", in which he investigated the consequences of the processes of modern society for the individual from a rather pessimistic perspective. Durkheim understood suicide as a social rather than individual phenomenon and differentiated between three types: altruistic, egoistic, and anomic, whereas the anomic suicide was the one he related to modern society. According to Durkheim the individual needs a hierarchical order, which diminished with the emergence of modern society by bringing forward a condition of individualism and anomie, where social norms had lost their validity. This process led to an increase in frustration and as a result to an increase in suicide.[33]

Durkheim, even more than Tönnies, emphasized the negative consequences of modernization and individualization by showing their rather destructive force due to the creation of anomie and with it the loss of orientation, which he considered indispensable to life.

---

[30] Müller 2006, p.150-157
[31] Münch 2002, p.91
[32] Ibid, p.66
[33] Durkheim 1973; Münch 2002, p.74-80

2.2.4 Max Weber

Karl Emil Maximilian Weber was born in 1864 in Erfurt into a time and social class which was characterized by economic, technological, societal and cultural rise. He became well-known due to several of his concepts, out of which one is particularly related to him: the concept of "rationalization" and especially the interdependence of capitalism and rationalization. In the beginning he applied his rationalization concept mainly to economy, technology, science, etc. which further brought him to question the costs of the rationalization process, with a special focus on the costs of bureaucratization, which he understood as a consequence of rationalization. Weber discovered ambivalence in the consequences, positive in the economical sense through an increase in efficiency but negative in the social context by leading to dehumanization, objectification, impersonalization, etc. Consequently, the rationalization of working processes as a consequence of modernization was understood to bring forward negative side-effects for the individual. He feared the dissolution of individual freedom and democracy due to bureaucratization and appealed for a fight against it.[34]

As was already mentioned in relation to Tönnies, Weber also referred to the duality of community and society, which he translated into processes, i.e. "Vergemeinschaftung" and "Vergesellschaftung".[35] The transition from one to the other is based on rationalization, which suggests that he explained the societal change also through modernizing and with it expanding tendencies, but from a more economic perspective. He, in accordance with Tönnies and Durkheim, perceived this transition as a threat for the individual.

Summing up, it could be observed that already in the very beginning of modernization and globalization, individualization as a consequence of those processes was perceived rather skeptically, particularly for the individual. According to the illustrated classics, apart from Simmel, only by clinging to the traditional forms of community those conditions indispensable for life can be upheld.

After the clarification of the theoretical framework of the research, the next chapter is going to illustrate the historical background, that is what conditions characterized post-war atmosphere and how these conditions facilitated an increasing individualization.

---

[34] Kaesler 2006, p.190-203
[35] Weber 1984, p.69

3 Historical Background

Apart from the illustration of the features of post-war modernism, which is understood to have promoted the individualization process[36] and consequently constitutes a main basis for the focus of the research, the investigated time frame, i.e. reflexive modernization, is also going to be defined and characterized in this chapter. The fact that post-war modernism is considered a climax in relation to individualization and that individualization is understood as the main cause for a dissolving family in various concepts, both legitimate the limitation to post-WWII processes. The focus consequently not only lies on how post-war modernism has triggered conditions of the investigated time frame, but also on how they differ from each other and as a result, on why the investigated time frame constitutes a novelty.

3.1 Post-War Modernism

Post-war modernism has to be separated into two parts, first the immediate post-war phase, which was mainly characterized by the negative effects of the war. And second the phase of reconstruction and rise in those countries affected by the war, which started in the end of the 1940s.[37] The side-effects of the latter on societal processes are the ones that are investigated here.

In sociological terms modernism in general is defined as a societal individualization process, where a relative high material living standard and advanced social security led to a crash in traditional structures and to an increased focus of the individual on him/herself.[38] Putting this definition into the context of the paper implies that the reconstruction of the destroyed European countries and the consolidation[39] led to a boom which also had an impact on the citizens, who were rising with the state as well. This rise provided several new opportunities for the individuals which were understood as a chance for a better life. In Max Weber's words this resembles the cultural chance of a generation, including certain ideas, political alternatives, etc. which results in specific horizons of possibilities.[40] Therefore, it was society which created those structures that made it even possible for the individual to focus on his/her

---

[36] Therborn 2005, p.237
[37] HDG
[38] Beck 1986, p.116
[39] Mies 1991, p.7
[40] Kamphausen 2010, p.255

own life rather than on the life of the others.[41] According to Beck, this development has taken place in all rich western industrial countries.[42]

In his work "Silent Revolution" released in 1977 the political scientist Ronald Inglehart introduced his idea of the post-material change in values, which is based on economic growth connected to wealth of the mass and also on securities granted by the welfare state. According to him, social values, which are based on physical survival and security, clear the way for values, which are based on participation, self-fulfillment and quality of life.[43] Or to put it into Karl-Martin Dietz's words: The hegemony of society had yielded for the hegemony of the individual.[44]Inglehart relates the change in values further to the family by claiming that those people oriented at post-material values, and supported by economic and social security, tend to encourage ideas of families, where a woman does not necessarily need to give birth and illegitimate parenthood is accepted. Also, a more liberal attitude towards divorce, abortion and homosexuality can be observed. He proves the negative interconnectedness between post-materialism and family orientation through the decrease in birth rates[45], which further suggests that his idea of a dissolving family is mainly based on the structural aspect.

Considering this demonstration, post-war modernism can be understood as a climax of individualization due to the rise of certain opportunities together with the liberation of tolerance and the longing of the individuals for self-fulfillment. The consequences of this period, in combination with its predominant conditions and processes, will become more obvious in the reflection on post-war modernism conducted in reflexive modernization.

3.2 Reflexive Modernization

Ulrich Beck's "Risk Society" introduced a new era, the so called reflexive modernization, which poses the investigated time frame for the purpose of this paper. The book not only demonstrated the conditions predominant at that time, but also how they were brought forward, which includes a detailed illustration of post-war modernism, especially of the consequences of the era. Also, his bringing forward a new concept of society, which he labeled as risk society, shows his perception of a significant change in circumstances which needed closer inspection. The fact that he brought forward two new concepts, namely risk society and reflexive modernization, in order to show the emergence of new ideas and

---

[41] Hoffmann-Nowotny 1995, p.334
[42] Beck 1986, p.116
[43] Inglehart 1977
[44] Dietz 1994, p.10
[45] Huinink / Konietzka 2007, p.110

furthermore, that a number of family researchers, such as Abels and Huinink for instance, have referred to him as initiator of a new epoch[46], both legitimate the use of his concept as the starting point of the chosen time frame for this research.

One of the main historical events in the 1980s was the fall of the iron curtain in 1989, together with the circumstances which led to the end of the Cold War.[47] This milestone certainly brought forward a wide range of new perspectives and opportunities, particularly in the sense of social and geographical mobility. Even though Beck's "Risk Society" was already published in 1986, which was before the fall of the iron curtain, circumstances already had changed since post-war modernism and therefore already had had effects on societal processes.

According to Beck, "reflexive modernization … is supposed to mean that a change of industrial society which occurs surreptitiously and unplanned in the wake of normal, autonomized modernization and with an unchanged, intact political and economic order implies the following: a radicalization of modernity, which breaks up the premises and contours of industrial society and opens paths to another modernity."[48] Whereas modernization explains the transition from agrarian to industrial society, reflexive modernization was caused by the replacement of the latter through a new societal form.

Keupp explains the change through an increased dissolution of the securities offered by the state and other institutions, so to say integrating achievements which generated trust and affiliation for instance, in post-war society, which consequently forced the individual to take over his/her life organization all by him/herself.[49] According to Benton, the decrease in security has several causes, such as that "traditional forms of class society are dissolved; changes in the labor market and in gender relations and family forms render the institutions of the welfare state unsustainable and inappropriate; globalization and reflexivity in lifestyle choice and consumption render centralized forms of economic control unworkable; while the established parties and political institutions lose their legitimacy." He further defines reflexive modernization as a "democratization of personal life, in which relationships between lovers, friends, parents and children and so on are no longer governed by traditional assumptions and expectations."[50]

---

[46] Abels 2007, p.359; Huinink / Konietzka 2007, p.105
[47] Rosenberg
[48] Beck 1994, p.3
[49] Keupp 2010, p.250
[50] Benton 2000, p.99

The main focus of the individual lies in self-realization, the search for the personal identity, the development of personal competences and the constantly staying in motion, which already characterized the immediate post-war era. What can be considered new in reflexive modernization is, as mentioned before, that external granted securities increasingly dissolved which consequently individualized social risks. As a result psychological dispositions like fear, conflicts, senses of guilt etc. started to increase.[51] This implies that one of the main differences between post-war modernism and reflexive modernization lies in the observation that the individual has not only isolated him/herself from other people, as in modernism, but also from him/herself. An increasing number of people are alienated by themselves, not understanding their own thoughts, emotions or actions anymore.[52] The once highly praised wish for individualism and freedom has suddenly turned into a grant for insecurity. The liberation of dependencies has scilicet also led to isolation and pressured the need for a high degree of conformity of the individual.[53] Or as Beck expresses it, "individualization is not based on the free decision of individuals" but rather on "compulsion". He mentions this in accordance with Sartre, who claimed that "people are condemned to individualization."[54]

The historical background illustrates how those conditions, which are understood to facilitate the individualization process, have advanced since the characterizations by the sociological classics, i.e. since the end of the 19th and beginning of the 20th century, and furthermore, how the positive attitude towards the process in post-war modernism has turned into skepticism in the beginning of reflexive modernization, similar to the one already brought up by the majority of the presented sociological classics. Whereas Beck claimed the existence of superficial contacts and decreased intimacy[55], Tönnies "was antagonistic to the growth of individualism. He believed that acute individualism led to egoistic, self-willed individuals who sought friends only as means and ends to self-interested gains."[56]

Considering the confrontation of those two epochs, the main aim of this investigation is to find out whether this attitude towards a decrease in social values, and with it a dissolving family, was upheld since the beginning of reflexive modernization, or whether prevailing

---

[51] Beck 1986, pp.156
[52] Dietz 1994, p.21
[53] Mies 1991, p.8
[54] Beck 1994, p.14
[55] Beck 1986, p.187
[56] Hutter 1981, p.87

conditions and their consequences have been perceived differently. This would, based on the relativist perspective, render those concepts obsolete, which suggest dissolution of the family.

4 Methodology and Perspective

As mentioned before the main research question of the thesis is as follows:

"Can the theory of the dissolving priority of family for the individual be seen as a consequence of misinterpretation or is it supported by scientific research?"

The aim of this chapter is first to present the perspective the research is based on, i.e. the relativist perspective. This is necessary due to one of the basic ideas of the investigation, namely that the relativist perspective has the power to dismiss concepts. The chapter then presents the methodology which is used in order to answer the research question. This includes the illustration of the research strategy, the selection of cases and variables and the methodological process. Afterwards, the individualistic and hermeneutic approaches are elaborated, which the research is based on.

4.1 Relativist Perspective

One of the main objectives of the paper is to show how relativity determines the relevance of certain concepts, which in this research resembles the relevance of the idea of a dissolving family. Consequently, the epistemology, namely the area of philosophy which is "concerned with the nature, sources and limits of knowledge"[57], of this research is based on cognitive relativism. "Cognitive relativism is quite compatible with the idea that each person has an individual life history which partly determines how people use concepts taken from their surroundings".[58] This characterization signifies contextually based perspectives and interpretations. In relation to the exposed investigation this implies that the understanding of the individualization theory is relative in the sense that interpretations of the consequences depend on the personal background. Therefore, whether family is perceived to be dissolving or not due to individualizing factors depends on the life world of the sociologist.

The term "life world" was mainly characterized by the Czech philosopher Edmund Husserl in his "Crisis Papers" released in the 1940s, the Austrian sociologist Alfred Schütz in several of his works published mostly between the 1950s and the 1980s, and the German sociologist Jürgen Habermas in his "Theory of Communicative Action" released in 1981.[59]

---

[57] Klein 2005
[58] Raven et al. 1992, p.xxv
[59] Dietz 1993

Husserl separates the life world into two different aspects, namely active and passive, or experienced and inexperienced. The individual acts both as constituting subject and as constituted object in the world. Consequently, whenever the individual acts as a scientist and produces theories on the life world, those theories need to be based on the passively experienced life world, so to say the world in which the scientist exists as constituted object.[60] Alfred Schütz adopted Husserl's dual characterization of the life world, which in his conceptualization is labeled as the "excellent reality" vs. the "overall context of life sphere" and also the "common sense world" vs. the "world of science" [61]. According to Schütz it has to be distinguished between the social world, in which humans are living naively, and the one which poses as the object of scientific investigation. The individual always poses as the center of the perceived social world, which distinguishes the object of the investigation and the scientist from each other. Schütz describes the observer as lonely due to the fact that he/she considers somebody else as center of the world and has put him/herself outside the social world with its system of relationships. The statements made on the object of investigation depend on the viewpoint of the scientist and consequently change whenever he/she moves to another perspective. Furthermore, they are based on equability and ideal types, which he characterizes as model of consciousness without the ability of spontaneity and individual will. This is where the "principle of relevance" becomes more obvious, namely with Schütz's claim that the mentioned ideal type is still embedded in certain structures and therefore not only dependent on the definition of the scientist but also on the perception of those structures. Considering these ideas, Schütz also supports Husserl in the claim that social explanations need to be based on the given reality, so to say the life world which is pre-scientific. The subjective sense, embedded into a system of relevance, which is part of the "common sense world" and therefore given, constitutes a main focus for Schütz. He even declares the subjective sense in relation to the sociocultural life world as the foundation of the construction of theory in social science. According to him action can only be understood through the perspective of the acting[62], which he labels as the "postulate of the subjective interpretation" and the basis for the ideal type with the aim to explain behavior within an understandable context. He opposes this with the "postulate of adequacy" which describes the need for every statement on a certain action to be understandable and reasonable for the acting and its surrounding. According to Schütz, those three aspects, so to say the postulate of the

---

[60] Ibid, pp.22
[61] Ibid, p.27-35
[62] Ibid

intersubjective interpretation and of adequacy and the principle of relevance apply to every level of sociological investigation and equip the scientist with the security not to lose contact with reality.[63]

Habermas supports both Husserl's and Schütz's idea of the duality, which he separates into the "perspective of the participant" and the "perspective of the observer". He emphasizes intersubjectivity, which can only be granted through a shared basis in relation to background knowledge. Life world as understood by Habermas can be divided in three aspects, namely culture, society and personality. The interplay of those three aspects enables a shared life world which furthermore facilitates communicative action.[64]

The concepts on the life world presented here signify relativity in understanding by claiming that only a shared life world enables an equal interpretation of a concept, even if the interpretation is based on the same given reality. Therefore, whenever a concept is observed from the perspective of a different life world, the chance is high that the perceptions differ in their outcome, which consequently renders each of the perspectives relative due to the variety of potential outcomes.

A different family of origin can already suggest a distinct life world, particularly when it comes to the conceptualization of the family itself. This comes from the fact that even between two families, which exist next to each other, the structure (passive, given) and with it the communication (active) can differ. This has an impact on the understanding of the family. This signifies the relativity of family concepts, considering that it is rather complex and quite challenging to create generalizations.

Consequently, to be more specific, the research is not only based on relativism in general, but on the relativistic view of social constructivism, which claims, that human perception does not display reality but rather construct it. This suggests that the external reality is not objective, but subjective, namely mental.[65] Relating this to the research herein means that, because everybody creates his/her own social reality, a difference in description is possible, even if the description refers to the same "reality". The dissolution or non-dissolution of the family is therefore based on the individual construction of the concept family and the individual perception of it in the personal surrounding.

---

[63] Schütz 1972, p.22-50
[64] Dietz 1993, p.90-98
[65] Harbach 2004, p.3

These arguments signify the power of the relativist perspective in relation to the rejection of concepts. As long as pro-familial perspective persists in some life worlds, general conceptualizations suggesting the dissolution of the family become obsolete.

4.2 Selection of Method and Research Design

The methodology of the research is oriented on the suggestions of both, Todd Landman (2008) and Bennett and George (2005).

The research question, with the aim to find out whether the idea of the dissolving family is supported by scientific research, entails the systematic review of existing concepts in order to enable an answer. As was mentioned before, the investigation of existing concepts can prove the actual dissolution of the family based on the idea that in case concepts still claim persistence those which suggest dissolution become obsolete.

The expression "dissolving priority" first signifies a change which is a process containing several steps. It implies that at some point conditions must have been different from the contemporary ones. Therefore by comparing various steps with each other, so to say different stages of the process, change, or no change, can be detected. As a result the most suitable approach to answer the research question seems to be the comparative method. The change in the presented case refers to the change in the priority of family, i.e. whether the emotional importance of family members has increased, decreased or stayed the same (which would signify no change). The focus on emotional importance is based on the question, whether the decrease in dependency, as a result of post-war processes and a trigger for individualization, has also resulted in a decrease in emotional importance, which could signify a dissolving family. Importance will be measured by persistence in contact and the personal perception of the family. The latter suggests that family is understood to offer unconditional support for instance, which signifies emotional importance for the purpose of the research.

Second, the expression implies linearity, which becomes obvious when the assumption made before is considered, claiming that the more globalized the world, the more individualized the people and the more dissolving the family, as the dissolution of the family is considered to be a main consequence of individualization. This is where theory is actually tested, i.e. through the investigation of difference. This is legitimized by the fact that if the dissolution of the family actually is taking place, this would further mean that all scientific research that will be investigated would have to claim this or at least the concepts would have to move into the direction of the dissolving family as time has passed. But if there is difference in the outcome

of the research, with a special focus on the rejection of the dissolving family in those concepts that were published quite recently, this would namely negate linearity and suggest that the family is not dissolving in actuality but only in individual theory. This is where the relativity of concepts becomes not only relevant but also descriptive for the purpose of the research.

Considering these thoughts the first step of the actual research will be fulfilled through content analysis. This step ought to visualize the perception of the investigated sociologists in relation to the development of the family and as a result can be understood as the premise in order to enable the actual comparison.

"The distinction between different comparative methods should be seen as a function of the particular research question, the time and resources of the researcher, the method with which the researcher is comfortable, as well as the epistemological position he or she adopts."[66] In consideration of these factors, the aim is to find the most appropriate comparative method in order to answer the research question.

In comparative method two main system designs can be mentioned: most similar systems design (MSSD) and most different systems design (MDSD). The first design tries to find differences between similar cases which bring forward a different outcome and the second investigates different cases with a similar outcome.[67] This research tries to prove the legitimacy of the concept of the dissolving family through two comparative approaches; first, by investigating the suggested linearity of the concept, and second, by illustrating the relativity of the concept.

In order to investigate linearity behind a concept the most similar systems design (MSSD), as proposed by Landman and illustrated above, seems to be the most appropriate research design. In case a similar basis still leads to a different understanding of given conditions, the validity of a generalizing concept can be questioned. Relating this theoretical assumption to this research means that if cases are included into the study which feature very similar conditions not only when it comes to the geographical frame but also to the theoretical frame - which here suggests that they base their concepts on individualization theory - and if those cases vary in their outcome, particularly if a rejection of the dissolving family can be found in recent theory, then this suggests that the linearity indicated by the idea of the dissolving family cannot be supported. Consequently, this would imply that the individualization theory

---

[66] Landman 2008, p.24
[67] Ibid, p.70

and with it the concept of the dissolving family need to be seen as individual and interpretive rather than general and descriptive concepts.

4.2.1   Selection of Cases

Corbin and Strauss define theoretical sampling as "data gathering driven by concepts derived from the evolving theory and based on the concept of 'making comparisons', whose purpose is to go to places, people or events that will maximize opportunities to discover variations among concepts and to densify categories in terms of their properties and dimensions."[68] The upcoming paragraphs discuss the criteria for the selection of the cases from which the data, i.e. the perception of familial processes, are going to be derived.

Considering the research question, the focus lies on existing scientific research in matters of the persistence of the family, which consequently constitutes the first criterion for the selection. According to Max Weber sociology is a science, which tries to understand and explain social action with a particular emphasis on its causes.[69] Scientific sociological research thus aims at explaining observed societal circumstances or processes by investigating their potential triggers. To specify scientific research more in the context of this paper, it postulates not only that understanding and explanation of social action is presented, but that it is published in print by an author who comes from the field of sociology. This is important to enable a shared basis when it comes to the understanding of the theories and concepts. The presented criterion will be verified through the performance of a professorship in the field. The publication further needs to pose a novelty at the time of its emergence, or at least be labeled as such. Whether the selected concepts really are different from each other is to be investigated in this paper and therefore not known at this point. Because concepts are labeled differently does not necessarily make them different in their nature.

Considering both the main definition of scientific research and the one in relation to this thesis, sociologists, and therefore individual people will compose the cases that ought to be compared. "Units of analysis are the objects on which the scholar collects data"[70], which in this research are the theories on family the sociologists have published.

Given the nature of the research project with the intent to either find difference or no difference in researchers' understanding of familial processes and the time frame in which it is conducted, comparing a few cases seems to enable the best results. According to Landman

---

[68] Corbin / Strauss 1998, p.201
[69] Weber 1984, p.19
[70] Landman 2008, p.18

the main feature of comparing a few cases includes intentional selection and can lead to the problem of "too many variables and too few cases" or also to "selection bias".[71] Furthermore, qualitative research eliminates the chance to generalize the findings. However, it facilitates a more in-depth treatment of few cases and as a result enables a better understanding of those.[72] The fact that the generalization of this research is not based on causality but rather on the illustration of how relativity can even enable the rejection of certain theories legitimizes the use of a qualitative approach. However, the thesis also offers a basis for the investigation of causality in further research by demonstrating various explanatory factors in relation to the understanding of family, and also for the purpose of classification[73], which can be achieved by including a larger amount of cases.

The next criterion for the case selection is based on the inspected time frame. As mentioned before, the existence of change (or no change) that ought to be investigated is the one between the middle of the 1980s, which constitutes the starting point of reflexive modernization, and now. The starting point of the investigated time frame is legitimized by the fact that, since the beginning of the eighties, the question was increasingly raised whether a basic change in societal forms and principles of bindings was taking place.[74] Consequently, the investigation of the mentioned time frame is supposed to offer two findings; first, whether concepts which emerged since reflexive modernization differ from each other, and second, whether significant differences to post-WWII ideas pertaining familial changes can be observed. The first would imply that even though circumstances are constantly changing, individualization theory as a basis of post-war family concepts does not necessarily lead to the understanding of a dissolving family. As a result causality would have been tested to an extent; so to say that A (which in this case resembles individualization) does not necessarily bring forward B (namely the dissolution of the family). This does not imply that globalization and with it individualization and the family are not interconnected, but rather that their interconnection does not always bring forward the same outcome.

Considering the ideas in relation to the time frame, three cases are going to be compared, or more precisely three sociologists. Because of the fact that industrialization led to rather rapid changes in a very short amount of time, even within two decades perspectives can have changed. Consequently, comparing every decade since the beginning of reflexive

---

[71] Ibid, p.29-36
[72] Ibid, p.20
[73] Ibid, p.5
[74] Kalupner 2003, p.7

modernization seems quite relevant in order to investigate the existence of a prevailing familial concept. The contemporary decade will be excluded due to its short existence. The reasoning of the authors for their presented outcomes is expected to offer the explanatory factors for the difference or no difference in their interpretation, which is relevant for the support or rejection of the hypothesis as illustrated in the first chapter.

Another criterion for the case selection is the geographical frame of the publications, not only in consideration of the author's origin but also of the geographical focus of the research, which is supposed to offer a similar basis. Landman suggests that, in order to find those features that are not shared between similar cases, (which can be achieved by using the most similar systems design) area studies are rather useful.[75] Because of the observation, resulting from a lot of research, that a vast amount of sociologists who developed relevant family conceptualizations either were German or focused on Germany or both, the research was limited to this geographical frame. Focusing on German sociologists also has the advantage that their publications can be read in the original language, which prevents the loss of meaning due to translation. This is particularly important whenever interpretation is involved.

The same sex, or gender, of the sociologists seems also relevant in order to use the most similar systems design, which in this research is male. Standpoint Theory in particular has focused on the idea that a different sex or gender can bring forward a difference in understanding[76] and therefore including both sexes would hinder a shared basis. The main reason why the male sex was chosen is the relevance of Ulrich Beck's introduction of reflexive modernization. Due to the fact that it is rather difficult to perceive the gender of the sociologists, the classification will be based on whether they are involved in traditional families for instance, families including wives and children.

The last criterion for the case selection can probably be best understood through an expression used by Landman in relation to comparing few cases, namely "intentional selection"[77]. A vast amount of concepts fulfills the hitherto illustrated criteria, but still only those I have a personal interest in will be investigated. Consequently, personal interest composes the last criterion. As mentioned before, because causality is not an aim of the paper this does not pose a problem in terms of bias.

Taking the demonstrated criteria – scientific research, sociology as a field, individualization theory as a basis, Germany as geographical framework, emergence of a new concept,

---

[75] Landman 2008, p.71
[76] Bowell 2011
[77] Landman 2008, p.27

reflexive modernization as time frame, male sex, and personal interest - into account, the following sociologists and their ideas were chosen:

As mentioned before, Ulrich Beck's concept of "Risk Society", published in 1986, also introduced a new era in sociological thinking, i.e. reflexive modernization. This explains choosing him for this decade in two ways: first it illustrates his relevance for societal thinking in that decade and for the here presented research in general since it introduces the characteristics of the starting period of the investigated time frame and the consequences rising out of them. Second, the fact that his concept became exceptionally well known and commented on to a great extent raised my interest in it as well. Even though the book is not particularly focused on the family it still illustrates Beck's understanding of how predominant conditions influenced the family. Ulrich Beck was born in 1944 in Pommern, studied sociology, philosophy, psychology and political science in Munich and later taught sociology in Muenster, Bamberg and Munich. In his research he mainly focused on class, modernization, globalism/cosmopolitism and individualization.[78]

Hans Bertram has released several books on family since the 1970s. He was born in 1946 in Westfalen, studied sociology, psychology and law in Munich where he later taught sociology and then micro sociology in Berlin.[79] The reason he is included into the comparison, constituting the focus of the 1990s, is that in 1995 he published the book "Das Individuum und seine Familie", which does not represent something new in general. However, within the book he demonstrated a new concept, or an old concept with a new label, which is the "multilokale Mehrgenerationenfamilie", so to say the multi-local more-generational family.[80]

The label suggests that, contrary to Beck, who, as illustrated in the second chapter, was very much concerned with the emotional consequences of the liberation of social bonds, Bertram has focused on the effects of the geographical fragmentation to a great extent. The inclusion of Bertram's concept is consequently supposed to offer an insight into a variety of potential interpretations of the same cause, namely the individualization process, and moreover, whether these result in a different outcome.

The third researcher that is included into the comparison is Steffen Mau. He was born in 1968 in Rostock, studied sociology and political science in Berlin and teaches political sociology at the university in Bremen.[81] In 2007 he introduced the idea of the "Transnationale

---

[78] MCG
[79] Humboldt-Universität zu Berlin
[80] Bertram 1995, p.15
[81] Uni Bremen

Vergesellschaftung", namely a transnational collectivization, with a special focus on the consequences of globalization in a geographical and social context.[82] The main reason for his inclusion is to find out whether Bertram's and his concept, which both focus on the effects of geographical fragmentation, actually differ from each other or are only labeled differently.

Those three concepts are to be explored to first find out whether differences in their attitude towards the persistence of family can be detected. Second, if differences can be seen, the aim is to find out if they are moving in a certain direction, and also how the sociologists explain their own reasoning. This last part is relevant for the investigation of the initially presented hypothesis, the first to find out whether the linearity, which the concept of the dissolving family suggests, can be observed. In general the investigation intends to illustrate how society is understood on a very individual basis and therefore how challenging it is to assign descriptive concepts to it.

4.2.2 Methodological Process of Comparison and Selection of Variables

The research is divided into several steps, where content analysis poses the first step, a comparison of the observed outcomes the second, the investigation of explanatory factors the third, the generation of a new hypothesis or support of the presented one the fourth and the refinement by empirical data the fifth. The main aim of this subchapter is to clarify how these steps will be conducted.

The first step of the research is to illustrate the main statements of the chosen concepts through content analysis, which provides the basis for the actual comparison by presenting the dependent variables. The main statements in relation to the persistence of family have to be investigated to a great extent through interpretation. Still, it is assumed that the chosen sociologists have expressed their ideas in rather clear statements which facilitate the interpretation. The focus lies on two aspects, which constitute the independent variables in the actual comparison, namely the "dissolution of the family in terms of composition" and the "dissolution of the family in terms of emotion". The first is mainly measured through an increase in divorce rates and a decrease in birth rates amongst other factors. The second is primarily observed through a claimed shift in values and an increased replaceability of the family through other social constructions, which both result in an incremental dissolution of the first. The independence and use of those two variables results out of the finding that, as illustrated in the second chapter, individualization is understood to have an impact on both

---

[82] Mau 2007

compositional and emotional aspects in relation to the change in family. Consequently, the position of the investigated sociologists toward both has to be examined in order to analyze their general attitude towards family development. Only because the family has changed in terms of composition does not have to diminish its value. Consequently, because sociologists are suggesting a dissolving family does not mean that they are claiming dissolution in general, which signifies the importance of a dual interpretation. However, if they argue for a declining priority of family in their research this would imply that they understand dissolution of the family based on emotional reasons (as well). The emphasis on those dimensions not only enables a better understanding of the chosen concepts but also of individualization theory in general.

In the second step the findings from the content analysis are inserted into a data matrix[83], which enables a clearly presented comparison of the cases. As already discussed, the selected sociologists constitute the cases which ought to be compared, whereas the emotional and structural dimensions pose the independent variables. The outcomes of the investigated concepts in relation to those independent variables constitute the dependent variables. Bennett and George stress the importance of using the proper variance of the variables in comparative method.[84] In this research the values, which are going to be assigned, are "yes" and "no", so to say whether the chosen sociologists understand family as dissolving, based on one or both dimensions, or not. This is legitimized through the idea that because the dissolution has already been parted into two dimensions, the observation of clear statements on each of the dimensions is expected to have been facilitated. In case these clear statements are not given, interpretation, i.e. the hermeneutic approach, which will be characterized in the end of this chapter, has to be implemented. The strict separation into pro and contra in relation to the dissolution of the family is necessary to classify and further compare the attitudes of the investigated sociologists.

The outcome of this comparison already enables the perception of difference or no difference in the concepts, and also in what sense they differ, so to say on what basis. Moreover, there is the chance to see a difference based on historical variety as well, which could enable the observation of a hint of a change in a certain direction.

The next step, which resembles the second aim of the comparison, is to focus on the personal reasoning of the sociologists for their statements; that is why they are or are not suggesting

---

[83] Scott 2004, p.39
[84] Bennett / George 2005, p.85

the dissolution of the family. This reveals some of the explanatory factors and facilitates the investigation of the initially presented hypothesis.

4.3 Refinement by Empirical Data

The last step of the research serves as refinement of this hypothesis and an illustration of the importance of the inclusion of the emotional dimension whenever a change in family is discussed. This refinement was conducted on the basis of both, the structural and emotional aspect of the research through the illustration of which values people from different backgrounds assign to the term "family" and how they define it. This test shows whether non-scientific people, as defined in this paper, understand family as dissolving or not.

The last observation was conducted by asking a number of people the question: "How do you define family and what does it mean to you?" The use of such an open question leaves space for a wide range of perspectives. It is legitimized by the fact that the focus does not lie on details, such as the exact composition of individual families, but rather on the understanding the individuals connect to the term family, both on an emotional and structural basis. This offers an insight not only into the emotional importance of the family for the individuals but also on the subjectivity and consequently the relativity of the concept. It also aims at finding out whether the idea of the substitute family can be observed or whether family is mainly understood in the way it was defined in the first chapter.

The question was sent out through Facebook which can be legitimized by the following reasons: First of all through Facebook it is not only possible to reach a large quantity of people in a very short amount of time but also to reach people from different generations, sex/gender, class, nationality, etc.[85] Using Facebook as a medium to collect data suggests relativity again, particularly in case solely the circle which surrounds the scientist is covered. In this case, the circle contains 137 people which are mainly in their twenties. But first of all the aim of the questioning is to refine the research by offering an insight into an expanded variety of potential perspectives, and not to generalize those findings. And second, the fact that mainly people in their twenties are included is rather productive given the nature of the paper, which aims at investigating if the emotional importance of family has decreased. Logically, if this has occurred it would mainly be visible with the younger generations, considering that they are the ones who have grown up merely in an individualized society, if

---

[85] Brickman-Bhutta 2012, pp.58

such exists. Consequently, using the presented sample offers an appropriate procedural method.

The question which arises here is whether the illustrations are affected by social desirability[86], i.e. that respondents could claim emotional importance of family even if it is not the case because that is what is understood to be expected. However, even though only some of the respondents are known well enough to be certain about whether their statements resemble their actual opinion, the rest is trusted due to the fact that negative answers and aspects were offered as well.

The reason conducting the research on a written basis is approved of is that people have time to think about their emotions and also to express them. In addition, it enables the inclusion of more cases and as a result of more potential perspectives.

An e-mail address was added to the message where the answers could be sent to.

4.3.1   Research Ethics

The process of the refinement of the theoretical findings is oriented on the "Code of Ethics" by the American Sociological Association, which is supposed to offer guidance for an appropriate scientific research in sociology. The Code mentions professional competence, integrity, professional and scientific responsibility, respect for people's rights, dignity and diversity, and social responsibility as main principles. It further discusses a number of ethical standards to be followed. Even though the compliance with all principles and standards is necessary for proper research, two aspects are even more essential in relation to this research, which is confidentiality and informed consent.[87] According to the Association "when confidential information is used in scientific and professional presentations, sociologists disguise the identity of research participants, students, individual or organizational clients, or other recipients of their service."[88] In order to grant anonymity the names of the respondents have been changed for the purpose of this paper. In relation to the informed consent the Code states that it "is a basic ethical tenet of scientific research on human populations. Sociologists do not involve a human being as a subject in research without the informed consent of the subject or the subject's legally authorized representative."[89] The respondents in this research were informed on the purpose of the questioning and the participation was based on

---

[86] Esser / Hill / Schnell 2005, p.355
[87] ASA 1999
[88] Ibid, p.13
[89] Ibid, p.14

voluntariness. In general, the research has been conducted in dependence on sociological research ethics such as the ones presented by the American Sociological Association to a great extent.

4.4 Hermeneutic and Individualistic Research Strategy

The presented methodology suggests the use of a hermeneutic and individualistic research strategy. Individualism is based on the assumption that individuals are unique social reality, which "amounts to the claim that social phenomena must be explained by showing how they result from individual actions, which in turn must be explained through reference to the intentional states that motivate the individual actors."[90] Consequently, for those social scientists who utilize individualistic strategy within their research individual theories constitute the premise whereas collective theories pose the conclusion. The individualistic approach not only offers a critical instance for other social scientific hypothesis – and consequently a rise in knowledge - but also enables the explanation of a variety of heterogeneous occurrences, both on an individualistic and collective basis. Consequently, an individualistic research strategy is conceived to enable a more in-depth understanding of reality than collective approaches.[91]

The presented characterizations can be related to the life world concept as characterized in the beginning of this chapter, with a particular resemblance to Schütz's emphasis on the individual sense. Given the nature of the research, the social phenomenon here represents a social conceptualization and the results are not derived from individual actions but rather from individual interpretations. To be more precise, the aim here is not to explain a social phenomenon but rather the existence of such through the investigation of individual understanding. This illustration offers a legitimization for the use of an individualistic research strategy.

The use of the hermeneutic approach suggests the use of interpretation in order to enable an investigation of this individual understanding and, as a result, a response to the research question. "The term hermeneutics covers both the first order art and the second order theory of understanding and interpretation of linguistic and non-linguistic expressions."[92] The approach is characterized by the claim that concepts can only be understood through the potential variety of interpretations, which signifies the inexistence of certain and objective

---

[90] Heath 2010
[91] Opp 1979, p.49-64
[92] Gjesdal / Ramberg 2005

knowledge.[93] This resembles the spreading idea that concreteness can only be reached through abstraction.[94]

The hermeneutic approach in this research is implemented through content analysis in order to investigate the main statements of the chosen concepts, with a particular focus on the emotional dimension. The fact that contrary to the structural dimension ordinary verifiability is not given with emotional features has to be compensated through interpretation.

---

[93] Ibid
[94] Kamphausen 2010, p.271

5 A Difference in Concepts? A Comparison.

This chapter, which treats the actual comparison of the concepts, is divided in three steps. First, the concepts are presented, both generally and in relation to family. Then a data matrix is constructed to facilitate the perception of the outcomes. At the end of the chapter, explanatory factors for the outcomes are summarized in order to answer the research question and to facilitate the investigation of the initially presented hypothesis. The concepts are presented in chronological order, both in the display of the characteristics and the data matrix. Consequently the first concept to be treated is Ulrich Beck's "Risk Society".

5.1 Ulrich Beck – Risk Society (1986)

Ulrich Beck's work "Risk Society" was released in 1986 and drew quite some attention to it. As was mentioned before, the concept was considered a main introduction to a new era of thought, namely reflexive modernization[95]. The indication of a change was already given by him when he added the extension "on the way into a different modernity" to the title. The first part of the book is very much concerned with the contours which have led to and are characterizing the risk society, with a special focus on chemical and nuclear risks, which he considers as civilized self threatening potentials and therefore as the new risks of the new society.[96] Contiguous to these risks are the conditions which surround risk society, characterized through the prolongation of life, a decrease in the time of gainful employment, better financial foundation and an increase in social and geographical mobility.[97] Beck offers several differentiations between the class society and the predominant society. For example, the impulsive force of class society can be seen in hunger, whereas risk society is characterized by fear. The mutuality of poverty clears the way for the commonality of fear, which is the new incitement for solidarity.[98] As mentioned in the third chapter, Inglehart had addressed this shift away from values based on physical survival in 1977.[99] The fear leads to social movements, which according to Beck not only resemble the new solidarity but also a new way of forming identity.[100] The second part of the book focuses on one of the

---

[95] Abels 2007, p.359
[96] Beck 1986, p.29
[97] Ibid, p.124-126
[98] Ibid, p.66
[99] Inglehart 1977
[100] Beck 1986, p.120

consequences of liberating post-war processes such as individualization of social inequality, which results in the de-traditionalization of the way of life in industrial society. This includes a change in several structures, including the familial structure. At different stages in life the familial structure transforms into a variety of potential shapes such as a temporary family based on negotiation, which can constitute the predominant form for one of the many life phases. He further characterizes this new type of family as an alliance of convenience in which individual and non-familial aspects have priority. The alliance is mostly based on the fear of loneliness, which Beck considers the most stabilizing factor of marriage and family.[101] Individualization, and with it the crash of the family, lead to new dependencies and standardizations, which are now oriented at the market.[102] The new values in large part are understood as the focus on the self, with a tendency towards narcissism and egoism. Beck stresses a misunderstanding of the new processes, which indeed include a focus on the self in terms of explanation and liberation, but on the other hand are based on the search for new social linkages.[103] The new social linkages are characterized by a large quantity of contacts, which as a result makes them more superficial and decreases intimacy. This can be related to the impersonal character of society as claimed by Weber for instance. Beck points out that these linkages enable new possibilities, but on the other hand cannot replace the importance of the stability of the primary group for the individual identity.[104] Also the German psychologist Klaus Schneewind, amongst others, suggested that the increase in egoism brings forward indifference between the people. He related this process not only to relationships in general but implicitly mentioned the impact on the family, for which he claimed a significant decrease in its value.[105]

5.2 Hans Bertram – Multilokale Mehrgenerationenfamilie (1995)

The book "Das Individuum und seine Familie", which means "the individual and his/her family", is an anthology focused on issues related to the change in family. The reason the concept is presented in Hans Bertram's name is that he is the editor and one of the main authors. He introduced the main concept of the book, the "multilokale Mehrgenerationenfamilie", that is the multi-local multi-generational family.

---

[101] Hill / Kopp 2004, p.125
[102] Beck 1986, p.188-210
[103] Ibid, p.157
[104] Ibid, p.187
[105] Schneewind 1996, p.119-121

In accordance with the other authors, Bertram mentions the appearance of an individualized society due to modernity and focuses on its consequences. He contrasts the core family, as it was perceived by theorists of industrial society, characterized by a family unified by a household, with new forms of family. According to Bertram only a minority of families in Germany still resembles the traditional core family. The number of single-households has significantly increased. This is due not only to an increase in the divorce rate, but also because changes in conditions, such as the prolongation of life and increasing mobility for instance, have caused that only a small part of life is spent together in one household by children and parents. However, the multi-locality, which characterizes the greater amount of life time, does not necessarily lead to a termination of the family relationship.[106]

Bertram criticizes the tunnel vision of those authors who have misunderstood the familial changes as dissolution of the family instead of a change in structure, so to say in composition and geographical scatter.[107]

5.3 Steffen Mau – Transnationale Vergesellschaftung (2007)

The book "Transnationale Vergesellschaftung", which means "social transnationalism", by Steffen Mau was released in 2007 and is mostly concerned with the consequences of globalization, which he emphasizes to a great extent in the de-nationalization and the transnationalization of society. Apart from their effects on inequality and political processes he also investigates the consequences not only on general social but also on familial relationships.

Transnationalism as a consequence of globalization and individualization also explains the decrease of the importance of the nation-state when it comes to societal integration and political regulation, such as the term globalization can be defined. Transnationalism differs from globalization in the social perspective; where globalization suggests decentralization and deterritorialization of social processes, in the transnational theory they stay territorially anchored.[108]

According to Mau transnationalism can be understood as one of the reasons for the increasing delocalization of the family. He mentions, in agreement with Bertram, that several authors have misunderstood the consequences of this delocalization and claims that even in individualized and mobile society family plays an important role. Mau observes the

---

[106] Bertram 1996, p.71
[107] Bertram 1995, p.13-16
[108] Mau 2007, p.37

importance of the family in transnational families through the quantity of home-visits for instance, which he describes as quite frequent, especially in relation to festivities. He concludes the focus on the consequences of transnationalism on the family by claiming that familial contacts, mostly in relation to the core family, can be seen as very close forms of relationships because they are generally stable, persistent, and involve a high degree of emotion.[109]

5.4 A Comparison of the Concepts

The comparison is first presented through a data matrix in order to facilitate the visibility of difference or no difference. Afterwards the findings of the matrix are discussed in detail by relating them to both, difference and change, based on the investigated explanatory factors of the authors.

	Dissolution of the Family in Terms of Composition	**Dissolution of the Family in Terms of Emotion**
Ulrich Beck (1986)	YES	YES
Hans Bertram (1995)	YES	NO
Steffen Mau (2007)	YES	NO

5.4.1 Addressing Difference/Change in Terms of Composition

One of the main facts that can be derived from the data matrix is the necessity to divide dissolution in different dimensions in order to produce meaningful statements on it. In the beginning of the 1950s the US-American sociologist Talcott Parsons still argued for a core family which was unified by one household. He did take the generation of a new family into account, which included moving out from the parental house and consequently caused a separation of the core family. However, this move resulted in the establishment of a new household which again unified a core family.[110] As was presented in the definition of the family in the first chapter, Rosemarie Nave-Herz' conceptualization of family, such as many family characterizations in the last decades, did not feature geographical unison as characteristic.[111] This confrontation of Parsons in the 1950s and Nave-Herz in the 21st century

---

[109] Ibid, p.111-122
[110] Bales / Parsons 1956
[111] Nave-Herz 2004, p.25

illustrates the rapidity of societal changes in the 20th century. In consideration of both, the actual change in composition as illustrated through statistical data in the first chapter, and with it the change in conceptualizations, it is comprehensible that also since the beginning of reflexive modernization a change in the composition of the family can be observed. The investigated authors also based their arguments for a change in the structural dimension mainly on the mentioned observable aspects, i.e. the decrease in birth rates and increase in divorce rates. Also, the prolongation of the life time is pointed out to have an impact on the change in composition.

As the label already suggests, reflexive modernization as introduced by Ulrich Beck is characterized by reflection on modernism. Even though Parson's concept was produced in the main individualization phase in post-war modernism, where familial aspects were already changing, circumstances and their consequences are easier perceived in retrospection. The change has mostly become visible in the 1970s and 80s with the beginning of reflexive modernization, and even led to the emergence of this new era.

The fact that all of the investigated concepts, including the one which emerged in 2007, claim a change in family structures towards new family models accounts for the assumption that as globalization is moving on, changes in structures are moving on as well. This suggests a certain linearity of the individualization process in relation to the composition of the family.

Mau addresses this change in composition to a great extent through transnationalizing processes. Because of the increasing dissolution of geographical borders and the better individual basis as consequences of globalization and post-war recovery, cross-border opportunities can be seized, which has an impact on the family mainly because of the geographical fragmentation of the family members. He labels this change as transition from the mono-local to the plural-local family model.[112]

Beck also explains the improvement of individual circumstances through better financial and mobile conditions amongst other aspects, which is quite similar to Mau's perspective. However, in relation to the actual causes for the change of the composition, Beck's understanding differs. Whereas Mau considers geographical fragmentation as main cause, Beck emphasizes on various other triggers, such as the change in the situation of women. According to Beck, women were liberated from the dependency of their husbands, which enabled the chance to get divorced, for instance, and brought forward new family models. Also, the increase in the importance of education, and the fact that it became accessible to a

---

[112] Mau 2007, p.112

greater amount of people, is considered as a cause.[113] This signifies a change in values, from traditional, including family values, to post-traditional, which are oriented not only at self-fulfillment but also at the demand of the market. This further demonstrates the new dependencies created by post-war society.

Bertram's explanation of the change in the composition of the family is also very much oriented on modern ideas, with a special focus on the position of the welfare state. According to him, the welfare state acts as security against risks. He relates his explanation not only to the increase in divorce rates but in general to the increase in single-households based on the absence of the necessity of emotional bonds.[114]

Coming back to the question for the existence of difference/change in the understanding of the family as dissolving in terms of composition, it can be observed that neither difference nor change can be detected. This suggests that since the beginning of reflexive modernization the observation of a change in family forms has been persistent. Also, the reasoning of the investigated sociologists appears to be quite similar. All of them base their claims mainly on the consequences of globalization and modernity, which are understood to even have enabled the chance to lead a more individualized life. Those requirements have resulted in the decrease of the traditional family, as it was understood and characterized by Parsons in the 1950s, and brought forward a variety of new family models, based on geographical fragmentation to a great extent. The models that are perceived as the most increasing ones are single-households and single mothers with their children.[115]

What accounts primarily for the similarities in the understanding of the change in composition is mainly the fact that it is easier to be tested than emotion and value, because it does not rely on interpretation. Several authors, such as Mary Maynard, started to emphasize the distinction between household and family.[116] The organization of a household is tangible and as a result simply grabbed, whereas the dimensions of importance and value, which resemble emotions and in Maynard's terms family, have to be captured by using more complex methods. In this thesis the emotional dimension is mainly observed through the reasoning of the authors for their assumptions on societal processes which suggests that the representation of emotions can only be captured through personal demonstration.

---

[113] Beck 1986, p.205-209
[114] Bertram 1995, p.9-14
[115] Destatis; destatis 2012
[116] Maynard 2000, p.412

5.4.2   Addressing Difference/Change in Terms of Emotion

As can be seen in the data matrix, the emotional aspect is where the concepts differ, or at least where two different perspectives may be grasped.

As illustrated before, reflexive modernization resembles a new direction of thought, which is characterized by its reflection on the conditions of modernity. One of the main ideas of this epoch is that modernity, and with it individualization, have brought forward not only opportunities but also risks, which have to be overcome in some way. Beck has illuminated those risks and focused on their consequences. Where his idea differs from Mau's and Bertram's is that, according to Beck, the emerging fear of the people does not necessarily strengthen the family, but may be overcome through different kinds of social bonds as well. Therefore, he suggests replaceability of the actual family[117] and as a result the emergence of substitute families which grant the security the individual strives for. Mau and Bertram on the other hand claim the exact opposite, that on the emotional basis family is not replaced but rather strengthened, or at least persistent. Bertram illustrates that even though geographical fragmentation is taking place, this does not necessarily entail an abandonment of communication and interaction between members of a family.[118] Also Mau emphasizes the importance of the family even within transnational families. This is suggested by his definition of a transnational family for instance, which does not only imply a cross-border fragmentation of family members but also certain flexible strategies in order to overcome this fragmentation, which signifies persistence in the communication.[119] Both Bertram and Mau base the opportunity to even maintain such circumstances on the improvement in transportation and communication.[120] The world has managed to overcome distance. Having family members that do not live with each other does not necessarily imply dissolution in their emotional importance. Mau further suggests that when it comes to emotional, material and factual support, the family still constitutes the main point of reference.[121]

As can be perceived here is that on the basis of emotional change, the concepts differ from each other. Where Beck suggests a decrease in value of the family, both Bertram and Mau contradict this suggestion. One explanation for this difference could be that Beck was one of the first ones to label the risks of post-war modernity and therefore drew a rather extreme

---

[117] Beck 1986, pp.188
[118] Bertram 1995, p.15
[119] Mau 2007, p.113
[120] Bertram 1995, p.15
[121] Mau 2007, p.112

picture in order to raise attention. Also, the time when Beck's concept was released was a time of great transition and therefore of an increase in fear of what was going to happen. One of these transitions was the upcoming fall of the iron curtain, a process which had started already long before the actual fall. This rather extreme situation could also explain a rather extreme point of view when it comes to conceptualizations. Fear of the unknown, i.e. anxiety, triggers pessimistic world views.[122] Still, one of the main reasons for the different outcome can probably be found in the starting point of the investigations. Both Mau's and Bertram's concepts appear to start from a pro-familial perspective, which do not try to prove persistence but rather to explain it. Beck's "Risk Society" on the other hand initiates from the exact opposite perspective, which becomes visible in his reasoning for an increasing replaceability of the family.

However, even though Beck suggested a more pessimistic view in relation to the persistence of the family, the data matrix and the elaboration show that a move towards a dissolving family cannot be observed when it comes to the emotional aspect. They imply the exact opposite, that is strengthening, or at least persistence. What Beck perceived as a threat for the family, was interpreted as the exact opposite by Bertram and Mau, who claim that the change in the composition of the family does not necessarily have a negative impact on its emotional dimension. Rather, in the predominant individualized society family is becoming more important due to its stability and persistence in an unstable and continuously changing environment.[123]

---

[122] Psychology Today
[123] Mau 2007, p.121

6 Empirical Observations on the Meaning of Family

This part of the research pursues the aim to illustrate an expanded variety of potential perspectives in relation to the persistence of family on an individual basis, which legitimates the use of a small number of cases.

The question "How do you define family and what does it mean to you?" was sent out to 137 people, which constitutes the number of my Facebook friends minus my core family. My family was left out based on the idea that honesty in relation to the understanding of family is rather challenging towards a family member. The sample offers a variety in several aspects, such as sex/gender, nationality, occupation, age, etc. which enables an insight into perspectives based on various backgrounds. This is supposed to show that the understanding of the term family is not dependent on one single aspect but on the interplay of all of them. To put this in Simmel's words, the perception of the life world depends on the interplay of the individual circles which compose a person.[124] In terms of nationality the questioning is not based on the geographical frame of the comparison, but rather on a global context, which seems appropriate in consideration of the chapter's aim.

One of the objectives is to see whether family is understood as family in the sense of relatives, or at least as it was defined in the first chapter, or in new forms, such as the substitute family. As illustrated before, Ulrich Beck suggested the rise of replacement family-like structures which do not include actual family members.[125] The questioning ought to investigate whether Beck's idea appears in the answers and therefore whether the concept of the substitute family deserves more attention.

Yet another aim of the empirical investigation is to find out how much value individuals assign to the families they grew up with and as a result to examine persistence of the family on an emotional basis.

In dependence on Mau's focus on the geographical aspect as explanatory factor for familial changes, the findings discussed within this chapter, are divided into those, who are studying or working abroad and those who stayed in their country of origin, or at least close to their families. This is based on the assumption that if the emergence of substitute families or at least a decrease in the emotional importance of the family of origin can be observed, this is

---

[124] Simmel 1908, p.403-453
[125] Beck 1986, pp.188

expected to happen more likely with those who are geographically separated from their families due to the fact that communication is more difficult. International calls are still expensive, which often decreases the quantity of communication. If this decrease in emotional importance cannot be observed, the validity of Mau's concept can be increased, which suggests that in a globalized world communication problems can be overcome and consequently geographical fragmentation does not have an impact on the emotional importance of family.[126]

34 people responded to the questioning. Some answers are going to be illustrated in the upcoming subchapters and in the appendix, whereas the rest can be extracted from the latter as well. The ones presented here are located in the same chronological order in the beginning of the appendix. The names have been changed for reasons of anonymity. After the presentation of some answers a more detailed analysis follows.

6.1 Family for those, who are studying/working in their country of origin

According to Lisa, a thirty-year-old single mother from Austria, everybody has a family, which suggests that composition for her is very much based on descent. She, such as a vast number of the other respondents, treated family and love quite synonymously. However, Lisa also mentioned the same characteristic of family such as the German Paul, a 24-year-old student, who claimed that "family is tough work, you need to take care of it all the time." In general, Paul's response was rather negatively shaped. For him "family means disappointment to a huge extent. It's some sort of black and white scheme, with certain people (my grandparents) being there for me all the time, giving me love, respect and appreciation when I need it, but also a handful of people (my mother and my biological father), who at some times in my life gave a fuck about how I felt." For Paul family is something that he is striving for rather than what he has experienced. Hannah, a 23-year-old-student in the States connects family with intergenerationality. "Family means generations of love and support. People that you will always be connected to no matter what."

Both, Henry, a 53-year-old dad from the US, and Markus, a 26-year-old Austrian student, amongst others bring up the idea that family is not necessarily connected to relatives. According to Henry, "family members can be related by blood or not related at all. No matter how the people are related, the genuine caring and concern for the other is what makes a family. It is love that holds a family together and the loss of love that breaks families apart."

---

[126] Mau 2007, p.111-122

Markus makes it even more obvious that the term family does not only have to be in relation to the family of origin: "Basically, I consider family not only as relatives, meaning my parents, my brother, my granddad and grandmother. I link family too with close friends on whom I can rely on and talk to during hard times. Family is therefore a construct of both. My relatives are and always will be a major part of my life and daily thoughts. The mixture between relatives and friends is so intense that I cannot distinguish between them emotionally. I guess that is due to the fact that my brother and I always shared friends and still do. Moreover, I never separated friends and family in the first place. My parents often joined activities with my friends. That is why the terminology family is not only true for relatives but applies to friends as well."

6.2 Family for those, who are studying/working abroad

Also Laura, a 25-year-old woman who was born in Austria and works in the Czech Republic, bases the definition of family more on an emotional ground. "The first thing that comes into my mind when I'm thinking about 'family' is some sort of a parent(s)-child construction. But when I think about it longer and try to get more into the depth of this concept, I figure out that it is a lot more than that. … It defines itself less by the persons included but more by the 'feelings'. … You might not see them for years but you still know they are your family you can come back to them, call them, write them every day and you will be always welcome. You can be yourself, grumpy in the morning, bitchy when you're premenstrual, they might tell you you're annoying, but still you know they accept you how you are and will be there for you when you need it." Bahar is a 25-year-old student, who was born in Turkey and just graduated in Sweden. According to her, "family is a complicated issue, it can mean affection and annoyance at the same time! There is unconditional love, support, trust, solidarity from a family that no matter what you know that they will help you so they are more important than our friends in many ways. When I think of my family I remember the big family dinners, cousins, having fun, laughing, sharing secrets and a loving parents. But it can also put some kind of pressure, when one of the family members don't support your decisions or try to empose their thoughts, it can be annoying. There are also expectations about career, marriage, even which city you will live, that they tell their opinions and try to influence you. For my case, there is no pressure regarding my decisions, they respect my decisions but I know some of my friends have hard time because no matter how much they love and need their families, they can be 'stupid' sometimes and don't get what you really need in life. They can be old-

fashioned or too protective, interfere your decisions, etc. So it's a complicated matter. Nothing in life is black and white, so is family."

Klaus, a 31-year old Austrian student in Sweden, differentiates between biological and social family. As an example for the latter he mentions shared apartments he has lived in, which were based on trust and the feeling of security. In general he understands family very much as a term whose existence is necessary to define an object but not really explains reality.

Pedro, a 27-year-old Mexican who just graduated in Sweden, very much agrees with Laura, Henry and Markus by claiming that "family (…) is a group of people that are usually, but not necessarily connected through a blood line, and develop tight socialization bonds within a larger society." John on the opposite, a 30-year-old Canadian who is married in Denmark and studies in Sweden, does base family on descent. "To me, the notion 'family' consists of those people I miss when I'm not together with them for an extended period of time. If this condition were applied generally, those who'd normally be considered 'friends' rather than 'family' could also be considered 'family'. Hence, more specifically, 'family' to me is the group of people with who I share common ancestry (via blood or marriage) and miss when I'm not with them for an extended period of time. Another qualification I might add to the notion of 'family' is that it consist of the group of people noted above and for which there is always either the possibility for forgiving its members or no need to forgive at all, no matter what they have done."

6.3 Additional Findings and Interpretation

The answers manifest Beck's ternary individualization[127] as presented in the second chapter. The liberation in historical social bonds can be seen in the fact that, due to the shift in dependencies, the respondents were even able to study or work abroad. The geographical fragmentation resulted in an increased personal responsibility, which resembles Beck's loss of traditional securities. The fact that new social models have risen, which sometimes are also defined as family, expresses Beck's new types of social integration. Where the answers differ from Beck's perspective is in the idea, that according to the respondents these new forms do not replace the family of origin.

Four characteristics of the family could be gathered, which were shared by a number of the respondents from all backgrounds:

- Unconditional (19 respondents ~ 56%)

---

[127] Beck 1986, p.206

- Comfortable (9 respondents ~ 26%)
- Supportive (19 respondents ~ 56%)
- Trust (7 respondents ~ 21%)

Isa, a 24-year-old Moldovan who is studying in Sweden argues that "family is the place or condition where you receive and give unconditional love, where you feel safe, welcome, taken care of and fully supported. You know that no external condition can change that." Markus, the Austrian student who was mentioned before, further explains that "family means backing me up, making me feel comfortable, giving me advice, being the lead when confusion takes over. Furthermore, family means tremendous fun, happiness, adventure and challenges, holidays from nine-to-five job. My family always will be straightforward with me and guides me sometimes with unpleasant speeches if necessary." According to Lena, who is 25 and studying in her country of origin, Austria, within family everything is forgiven because you are bound to each other. For her family means everything. The trust aspect was very well illustrated by Sara, a 24-year-old Ukrainian student in Sweden, who claimed that "Family means unconditional love and trust, comfort, support and understanding in any situation." The 29-year-old Austrian Lukas, who works in his country of origin, labels family as his "homebase". Marlene, who is 23 years old, was born in Germany and just graduated in Sweden, demonstrates this further by arguing that "family means to be home with people you don´t need words to communicate with.."

Most respondents did not feel the need to define the term family, as if it was something self-evident. The term "unconditional" seemed to offer enough information on the definition, which becomes visible in the frequency of its use. This implicitness pertaining to the existence of family can be related to Bertram's and Mau's use of the concept as discussed in the fifth chapter. It seems like even though several options for the understanding of family exist, the term is still recognized, connected to the family of origin to some degree and related to in emotional terms. The latter becomes particularly obvious in the above demonstrated answers. If the respondents defined family this was mainly on an emotional basis, which suggests that whether the family is dissolving or not has to be examined on that basis.

Furthermore, the majority argued for family rather positively by assigning characteristics such as trust, unconditional love and support. These characteristics resemble Tönnies' definition of

community and family as demonstrated in the second chapter, i.e. the existence of goodwill, trust and shared values.[128]

In addition, the emotional importance of family for the respondents has become very obvious, considering that it was highlighted by most of them. No differences could be detected based on geographical location, age, sex, occupation etc. Consequently the life world theory can be supported, considering that a variation is not based on one socio-demographic aspect but rather on the life world of the individual which is composed of the interplay of all aspects. This becomes visible with Markus for instance, who not only illustrates his attitude but also explains it through his socialization. However, even though he claims that he has not experienced family in the traditional sense, he still refers to members of his family of origin, namely his grandparents, as important and as family. Consequently, the relativity of the concept family in general becomes rather obvious by examining the answers.

The outcome of the questioning shows that Mau's transnational and Betram's multi-local concepts are very present, considering that although people are geographically fragmented, communication with their families is still persistent and rated as important.

Even though the questioning also asked for the definition of the family, the idea of the substitute family could not be supported, at least not in the way it was suggested by Beck and defined for the purpose of the paper in the first chapter. Some respondents did argue that family is not necessarily connected to relatives, that a peer group for instance can be perceived as family as well. However, none of them has claimed that this kind of family resembles their main family and consequently replaces the family of origin. Therefore, even though the term family can address a large quantity of people, the family of origin is still included in this definition. The potential coexistence of several forms of families can be related to Simmel, who claimed a coexistence of several social circles which increases individualism.[129] Connecting these two findings with each other suggests that both the expansion of the term family to a larger quantity of circles and with it the increase in individualism do not have to diminish the value of family.

---

[128] Tönnies 1959, p.187
[129] Simmel 1908, p.403-453

7 Conclusion

This chapter first summarizes the findings of the research with reference to the initially presented research question and hypothesis. It also offers the opportunity to include personal remarks in relation to the topic, which serve as a closure to the research.

7.1 Analysis

The generation of a new or support of the initially presented hypothesis is oriented on the fifth chapter of this thesis and based on both the comparison of the chosen sociological concepts as it was illustrated in the data matrix and the reasoning for their opinions by the sociologists themselves.

As illustrated not only in the actual comparison but also in the theoretical framework, the consequences of individualization can be split into two main aspects, namely the structural and the emotional. It has been supported by several researches that the quantity of traditional families has decreased, but not dissolved, and that a variety of new forms has emerged. This dimension of the change has found general agreement, mainly due to its elementary verifiability. When it comes to the emotional consequence of individualization, with a special focus on the priority of family, attitudes differ from each other, which can be explained by the need of interpretation in order to measure this type of change. However, the fact that attitudes differ is a statement by itself already, suggesting that different opinions are possible, dependent on different life worlds for instance. The comparison has been conducted based on the most similar systems design (MSSD), which indicates a shared basis on many aspects, but not all. Because the investigated sociologists have the same origin, come from the same field, etc., this does not mean that all their circles, as characterized by Georg Simmel,[130] are shared. Even a shared basis allows the existence of different life worlds, in the sense of Jürgen Habermas, with different belief systems.[131] This suggests that whenever concepts of family are produced, with a special focus on the emotional importance, the concepts are very much dependent on the personal socialization. This further implies that even though the conceptualization also relies on aspects like class, origin, historical time frame, level of education, sex/gender, family status, etc., it is mainly influenced by the upbringing of the individual, which can be different even between neighbors.

---

[130] Ibid, pp.404
[131] Dietz 1993, p.90-98

The fact that there is the chance to perceive persistence in the family shows that dissolution cannot be supported as long as this perception exists. In 1945 the Canadian sociologist Ernest W. Burgess had already claimed that the family has transformed from an institution to a companionship, where the first is based on traditional rules and the latter on affection.[132] Considering these ideas the initially presented hypothesis was supported, which was as follows:

"Even though modernization facilitates individualization, this process does not necessarily diminish the priority of family for the individual. The concept of the dissolving family misses the relevance of the emotional dimension which impedes the replaceability of the family."

Consequently, to answer the research question, the theory of the increasingly replaced and dissolving family, as it was indicated by Ulrich Beck's risk society and by the concept of a substitute family, can actually be seen as a misinterpretation based on the idea that geographical and legal unison of the family, such as past definitions suggested, do not provide information on the importance of the family on an emotional basis. The former unison can be explained through different dependencies instead of different values. Consequently even though the family, or as Burgess calls it the companionship, has experienced a significant change in composition, this consequence of individualization did not devalue individual roots. The roots, namely the family, are considered one of the only stabilities in the lives of the individuals, who, as illustrated in the third chapter, have become increasingly alienated by themselves in a rather unpredictable globalized world.

7.2 Personal Remarks

I have had several conversations about the past, where somebody had claimed that back then – whatever "back then" is supposed to mean – everything was better. Apparently back then values still existed; respect, social responsibility and whatever other value is perceived to have disappeared. I, on the other hand, am not sure whether family was ever as important on an emotional basis as it is now. Yes, individualization is taking place. And yes, people are focusing more on their own self-fulfillment, because this is what they are expected to. Individuals are supposed to make the best out of their lives. And they are supposed to take advantages of all the opportunities they get. Does this separate them from each other?

---

[132] Hutter 1981, pp.38

Definitely not. As was indicated in the beginning of this paper, individualization has brought forward several insecurities. Ulrich Beck has introduced a new era of thought with the illustration of these insecurities in his "Risk Society". But when it comes to the consequences of these insecurities, his point of view, which claims an increased replaceability of the family, differs from others, such as Mau's or Bertram's, or mine. I claim that the more insecure society becomes, the more we long for the feeling of security. The family will always persist, at least when it comes to the reproductive definition. That the composition of the family is changing is not in question. It can and was empirically tested that single-households and divorce rates are increasing and that birth rates are decreasing. That this is a consequence of individualization is evident as well, considering that certain opportunities had to emerge to enable such processes. That a change in the structural dimension necessarily signifies a change in the emotional dimension cannot be supported. Ferdinand Tönnies has illustrated the emergence of an expanded impersonal society already in 1887. Quite often contemporary and past ideas are rather similar. So already in the end of the nineteenth century the idea of individualization as a consequence of modernization was prevailing. But at that time the process constituted a novelty, the consequences could not be grasped yet, they could just be speculated. Tönnies' society was already characterized by strangeness, indifference, etc. Durkheim emphasized the rather destructive force of individualism which rose due to this new, expanded societal form. But its emergence did not make them devalue the conjoined aspect. The duality of society, which they suggested, needs to be applied to contemporary society as well in order to understand its actual composition. This implies that whenever the dissolution of the family is argued, one main aspect is left out both in retrospective and contemporary investigation, namely the emotional aspect. If research wants to test whether the familial situation really was better "back then", this can only be accomplished by the inclusion of past and present opinions, not of scientists, but of society itself. If this method is not implemented, the idea of the dissolving family will remain a consequence of retrospective idealization, so to say of an assumption that the past is always better than the present. And it will remain a consequence of misinterpretation if it insists on the idea that structure/composition and emotion are highly interdependent.

The investigated concepts were interpreted to have emerged from different starting points in relation to their aim. Bertram and Mau seemed to consider the persistence of the family self-evident, such as the respondents, and therefore tried to explain this attitude. Beck on the other hand focused more on the negative side-effects of individualization also by illustrating the

negative impact on the family. As was mentioned before, Beck's concept was published in a time of great transition, which could also mean that at this time his opinion was more prevalent than when the concepts of the others were published. This could pose a question for further research for instance, i.e. a comparison of various concepts which emerged in the 1980s in order to find out whether this could pose a cause for the difference in perception. In relation to this thesis based on the relativist perspective it is still assumed that his attitude can be derived from his socialization and his life world. This idea leads to the further presumption that Mau's and Bertram's life worlds are more alike even though Bertram and Beck share more tangible features, such as the year of birth (1944/1946) and the university for their degree in sociology (Munich). The uniqueness and subjectivity of the life world signifies the challenge of finding the motivation behind the approaches and could only be expressed by the authors themselves.

Both the comparison and its relation to the theoretical background were very productive in illustrating the relativity not only of the individualization theory, and with it the concept of the dissolving family, but of the concept family in general. It was even possible to demonstrate that the relativist perspective by itself has the power to prove certain concepts wrong. On a general basis the existence of pro-familial concepts renders those obsolete, which claim dissolution. Also, the comparison illustrated that new concepts do not necessarily imply new characteristics but rather a repeated dispute with old ideas. The empirical questioning hindered getting lost in theory and consequently too distanced from reality.

I was always wondering whether the construction of new bonds could be understood as a construction of new families. This question and the conversations which focused on the decrease in values both pose the reasons for this research. I wanted to find out whether there is some truth behind that, whether family really is dissolving. I found the exact opposite. While I was reading several studies on the topic, published in the last hundred years, I had the feeling that family actually was strengthened on an emotional basis. The fact that familial relationships are decreasingly based on dependency and increasingly based on choice signifies this strengthening. There seems to be some invisible bond between family members, which persists all through life. Certainly this is not the case for everyone, but the fact that it is still the case for some people emphasizes the persistence of the family. Due to this observation, together with the improvement in communication systems, Riesman's idea of the lonely crowd does not pose a threat for all of us. It can be found in reality, and in scientific research, such as in Beck's "Risk Society", but it cannot be generalized. Consequently, the concept of

the dissolving family does not necessarily pose a result of misinterpretation. It is true for some people, but it is not true for others and, therefore, becomes obsolete as it tries to define societal processes in general. As became mainly obvious in the empirical investigation, a coexistence of several forms of families is possible and does not necessarily have to diminish the value of the family of origin. As presented in the second chapter, the sociological classics, such as Max Weber and Emile Durkheim, considered traditional relationships as indispensable for life. Based on that idea they already suggested unconditional persistence of family indeed.

This is a giant world we are living in, and we are starting to spread all over the world. But the luck is on our side, because we can bring our families with us wherever we are going, even if it is just in our hearts.

Bibliography

Abels, Heinz (2007): Einführung in die Soziologie. Band 1: Der Blick auf die Gesellschaft. 3. Auflage. Wiesbaden: VS Verlag für Sozialwissenschaften

ASA American Sociological Association (1999): Code of Ethics and Policies and Procedures of the ASA Committee on Professional Ethics. http://www.asanet.org/images/asa/docs/pdf/CodeofEthics.pdf (accessed 28.08.2012)

Bales, Robert F. / Parsons, Talcott (1956): Family Socialization and Interaction Process. London: Routledge

Beck, Ulrich (1986): Risikogesellschaft. Auf dem Weg in eine andere Moderne. Frankfurt/Main: Suhrkamp Verlag

Beck, Ulrich (1994): The Reinvention of Politics: Towards a Theory of Reflexive Modernization. In: Beck, Ulrich / Giddens, Anthony / Lash, Scott: Reflexive Modernization. Politics, Tradition and Aesthetics in the Modern Social Order. Cambridge: Polity Press

Beck, Ulrich (2004): Der kosmopolitische Blick oder: Krieg ist Frieden. Frankfurt/Main: Suhrkamp Verlag

Bennett, Andrew / George, Alexander L. (2005): Case Studies and Theory Development in the Social Sciences. London / Massachusetts: MIT Press

Bertram, Hans (Hrsg.)(1995): Das Individuum und seine Familie. Lebensformen, Familienbeziehungen und Lebensereignisse im Erwachsenenalter. Opladen: Leske + Budrich

Bertram, Hans (1996): Familienwandel und Generationsbeziehungen. In: Buba, Hans Peter / Schneider, Norbert F. (Hrsg.): Familie. Zwischen Gesellschaftlicher Prägung und individuellem Design. Opladen: Westdeutscher Verlag

Brickman-Bhutta, Christiane (2012): Not by the Book: Facebook as a Sampling Frame. In: Sociological Methods and Research. http://smr.sagepub.com/content/41/1/57.full.pdf+html (accessed 19.07.2012)

Bowell, T. (2011): Feminist Standpoint Theory. In: Internet Encyclopedia of Philosophy. http://www.iep.utm.edu/fem-stan/#H4 (accessed 08.07.2012)

Browning, Gary / Halcli, Abigail / Webster, Frank (Eds.)(2000): Understanding Contemporary Society. Theories of the Present. California / London / New Delhi: SAGE Publications

Butler, Chris (n.d.): The Social Impact of Industrialization. In: The Flow of History. http://www.flowofhistory.com/units/eme/17/fc113 (accessed 11.07.2012)

Corbin, Juliet / Strauss, Anselm (1998): Basics of Qualitative Research. Techniques and Procedures for Developing Grounded Theory. Second Edition. Thousand Oaks / London / New Delhi: SAGE Publications

Denney, Reuel / Glazer, Nathan / Riesman, David (1955): The Lonely Crowd. A Study of the Changing American Character. New York: Doubleday Anchor Books

Destatis Statistisches Bundesamt (2012): Geburten in Deutschland. https://www.destatis.de/DE/Publikationen/Thematisch/Bevoelkerung/Bevoelkerungsbewegun

g/BroschuereGeburtenDeutschland0120007129004.pdf?__blob=publicationFile (accessed 13.07.2012)

Destatis Statistisches Bundesamt (n.d.): Bevölkerung. https://www.destatis.de/DE/ZahlenFakten/Indikatoren/LangeReihen/Bevoelkerung/lrbev05.html; Ehescheidungen (Ehelösungen). https://www.destatis.de/DE/ZahlenFakten/GesellschaftStaat/Bevoelkerung/Ehescheidungen/Aktuell.html (accessed 13.07.2012)

Dietz, Karl-Martin (1994): Individualität im Zeitschicksal. Gefährdung und Chancen. Stuttgart: Verlag Freies Geistesleben

Dietz, Simone (1993): Lebenswelt und System. Widerstreitende Ansätze in der Gesellschaftstheorie von Jürgen Habermas. Würzburg: Königshausen & Neumann

Durkheim, Emile (1973): Der Selbstmord. Neuwied / Berlin: Luchterhand

Elliott, Katherine (Hrsg.)(1971): Hat die Familie noch eine Zukunft? München / Wien / Basel: Verlag Kurt Desch

Esser, Elke / Hill, Paul B. / Schnell, Rainer (2005): Methoden der empirischen Sozialforschung. 7. Auflage. München: Oldenbourg

Filser, Franz (1978): Einführung in die Familiensoziologie. Paderborn: Schöningh

Gjesdal, Kristin / Ramberg, Bjorn (2005): Hermeneutics. In: Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy. http://plato.stanford.edu/entries/hermeneutics/#Turn (accessed 22.06.2012)

Harbach, Heinz (2004): Konstruktivismus und Realismus in den Sozial- und Verhaltenswissenschaften. Münster: LIT Verlag

HDG Stiftung Haus der Geschichte der Bundesrepublik Deutschland (n.d.): Nachkriegsjahre. http://www.hdg.de/lemo/html/Nachkriegsjahre/index.html (accessed 11.07.2012)

Heath, Joseph (2010): Methodological Individualism. In: Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy. http://plato.stanford.edu/entries/methodological-individualism/ (accessed 22.06.2012)

Hill, Paul B. / Kopp, Johannes (2004): Familiensoziologie. Grundlagen und theoretische Perspektiven. 3., überarbeitete Auflage. Wiesbaden: VS Verlag für Sozialwissenschaften

Hoffmann-Nowotny, Hans-Joachim (1995): Die Zukunft der Familie – Die Familie der Zukunft. In: Gerhardt, Uta / Hradil, Stefan / Lucke, Doris / Nauck, Bernhard (Hrsg.): Familie der Zukunft. Lebensbedingungen und Lebensformen. Opladen: Leske + Budrich

Huinink, Johannes / Konietzka, Dirk (2007): Familiensoziologie. Eine Einführung. Frankfurt / New York: Campus Verlag

Humboldt-Universität zu Berlin (n.d.): Curriculum Vitae Prof. Bertram. http://www.bgss.hu-berlin.de/lehrbereiche/mikrosoziologie/profbertram/vita (accessed 11.06.2012)

Hutter, Mark (1981): The changing family. Comparative Perspectives. New York / Brisbane / Chichester / Toronto: John Wiley & Sons

Inglehart, Ronald (1977): The Silent Revolution: Changing Values and Political Styles among Western Publics. Princeton: Princeton University Press

Kalupner, Sibylle (2003): Die Grenzen der Individualisierung. Handlungstheoretische Grundlagen einer Zeitdiagnose. Frankfurt / New York: Campus Verlag

Kamphausen, Georg (2010): Das Problem der Generationen: Kultursoziologische Konsequenzen einer wissenssoziologischen Debatte. In: Cappai, Gabriele / Shimada, Shingo / Straub, Jürgen (Hrsg.): Interpretative Sozialforschung und Kulturanalyse. Hermeneutik und die komparative Analyse kulturellen Handelns. Bielefeld: transcript Verlag

Keupp, Heiner (2010): Individualsierung. Riskante Chancen zwischen Selbstsorge und Zonen der Verwundbarkeit. In: Berger, Peter A. / Hitzler, Ronald (Hrsg.): Individualsierungen. Ein Vierteljahrhundert „jenseits von Stand und Klasse"? Wiesbaden: VS Verlag für Sozialwissenschaften

Klein, Peter D. (2005): Epistemology. In: Routledge Encyclopedia of Philosophy. http://www.rep.routledge.com/article/P059 (accessed 21.06.2012)

Landman, Todd (2008): Issues and Methods in Comparative Politics. An Introduction. Third Edition. London / New York: Routledge

Lohauß, Peter (1995): Moderne Identität und Gesellschaft. Theorien und Konzepte. Opladen: Leske + Budrich

Mau, Steffen (2007): Transnationale Vergesellschaftung. Die Entgrenzung sozialer Lebenswelten. Frankfurt / New York: Campus Verlag

Maynard, Mary (2000): Families and Households. In: Browning, Gary / Halcli, Abigail / Webster, Frank (Eds.): Understanding Contemporary Society. Theories of the Present. California / London / New Delhi: SAGE Publications

MCG Munich Center on Governance (n.d.): Prof. Dr. (em.) Ulrich Beck. http://www.mcg.uni-muenchen.de/personen/fellows/beck/index.html (accessed 11.06.2012)

Mies, Thomas (Hrsg.)(1991): Individualsierung in der Gesellschaft. In: Dialektik. Enzyklopädische Zeitschrift für Philosophie und Wissenschaften. Hamburg: Meiner

Müller, Hans-Peter (2006): Emile Durkheim (1858-1917). In: Kaesler, Dirk (Hrsg.): Klassiker der Soziologie: Von Auguste Comte bis Alfred Schütz. 5., überarbeitete und aktualisierte Auflage. München: Verlag C.H.Beck

Münch, Richard (2002): Soziologische Theorie. Band 1: Grundlegung durch die Klassiker. Frankfurt/Main: Campus Verlag

Nave-Herz, Rosemarie (2004): Ehe- und Familiensoziologie. Eine Einführung in Geschichte, theoretische Ansätze und empirische Befunde. München: Juventa

Opp, Karl-Dieter (1979): Individualistische Sozialwissenschaft. Stuttgart: Ferdinand Enke Verlag

Psychology Today (n.d.): Symptoms of Anxiety. http://www.psychologytoday.com/basics/anxiety/symptoms (accessed, 11.07.2012)

Raven, Diederick / Vucht Tijssen, Lieteke van / Wolf, Jan de (Eds.)(1992): Cognitive Relativism and Social Science. New Brunswick / London: Transaction Publishers

Rosenberg, Jennifer (n.d.): The Rise and Fall of the Berlin Wall. In: About.com. Part of the New York Times Company. http://history1900s.about.com/od/coldwa1/a/berlinwall.htm (accessed 11.07.2012)

Schröder, Anna (2010): Großbritannien – jenseits von Stand und Klasse? Zwischen Klassengesellschaft und Individualisierung. In: Berger, Peter A. / Hitzler, Ronald (Hrsg.):

Individualsierungen. Ein Vierteljahrhundert „jenseits von Stand und Klasse"? Wiesbaden: VS Verlag für Sozialwissenschaften

Shaw, Martin (2000): Theory of the Global State. Globality as an Unfinished Revolution. Cambridge: University Press

Schneewind, Klaus A. (1996): Gesellschaftliche Veränderungswahrnehmung und Wandel des elterlichen Erziehungsstils im Generationenvergleich. In: Buba, Hans Peter / Schneider, Norbert F. (Hrsg.): Familie. Zwischen Gesellschaftlicher Prägung und individuellem Design. Opladen: Westdeutscher Verlag

Schütz, Alfred (1971): Das Problem der Relevanz. Frankfurt/Main: Suhrkamp Verlag

Schütz, Alfred (1972): Das Problem der Rationalität in der Sozialen Welt. In: Brodersen, Arvid (Hrsg.): Gesammelte Aufsätze. 2. Studien zur soziologischen Theorie. Den Haag: Martinus Nijhoff

Scott, John (2004): Social Network Analysis. A Handbook. Second Edition. California / London / New Delhi: SAGE Publications

Simmel, Georg (1908): Soziologie. Untersuchungen über die Formen der Vergesellschaftung. Berlin: Duncker & Humblot

Simmel, Georg (1984): Grundfragen der Soziologie. (Individuum und Gesellschaft). 4., unveränderte Auflage. Berlin / New York: Walter de Gruyter

Sklair, Leslie (2008): Sociology of the Global System. In: Boli, John / Lechner, Frank J. (Eds.): The Globalization Reader. Third Edition. Malden / Oxford / Victoria: Blackwell Publishing

Therborn, Göran (2005): Nach dem Patriarchat. In: Berger, Johannes (Hrsg.): Zerreißt das soziale Band? Beiträge zu einer aktuellen gesellschaftspolitischen Debatte. Frankfurt/Main: Campus Verlag

Tönnies, Ferdinand (1959): Gemeinschaft und Gesellschaft. In: Vierkandt, Alfred (Hrsg.): Handwörterbuch der Soziologie. Unveränderter Nachdruck. Stuttgart: Ferdinand Enke Verlag

Uni Bremen (n.d.): CV Prof. Dr. Steffen Mau. http://www.smau.gsss.uni-bremen.de/index.php?id=mau_cv (accessed 11.06.2012)

Uni Graz (n.d.): Biografie Ferdinand Tönnies. http://agso.uni-graz.at/lexikon/klassiker/toennies/46bio.htm (accessed 12.06.2012)

Weber, Max (1984): Soziologische Grundbegriffe. 6., erneut durchgesehene Auflage. Tübingen: Mohr

Wilkinson, Helen (1997): Kinder der Freiheit. Entsteht eine neue Ethik individueller und sozialer Verantwortung? In: Beck, Ulrich (Hrsg.): Kinder der Freiheit. Frankfurt/Main: Suhrkamp Verlag

Appendix

The answers to the following questions are presented here: "How do you define family and what does it mean to you?"
The names have been changed for reasons of anonymity.

„Familie bedeutet für mich: Vertrauen, Wachstum, Wandel, Reife, Sicherheit (Emotional) ... Familie - Wurzeln des Lebens ... hat man immer, braucht man immer und sind im Normalfall immer für einen da. Die Familie muss man aber pflegen, dass können heute nicht mehr viele, weil die Menschen immer oberflächlicher und egoistitscher werden und meist erst dann den Wert der Familie wieder schätzen können wenn es ihnen schlecht geht und niemand anderer mehr da ist. Familie bedeutet Leben, bedeutet gemeinsam, bedeutet stark sein ... Familie = Liebe" (Lisa; female, 30, works in her country of origin - Austria, single mother, one sister)

"To me, family means disappointment to a huge extent. It's some sort of black and white scheme, with certain people (my grandparents) being there for me all the time, giving me love, respect and appreciation when I need it, but also a handful of people (my mother and my biological father), who at some times in my life gave a fuck about how I felt. Family is tough work, you need to take care of it all the time, but you often just don't have the energy to chase after something you are supposed to experience without asking and hoping for. To me, family often means to love someone, although you actually despise said person. Since I never actually experienced the traditional family life, the term 'family' and all its associations is a state of life I'm striving for, a future that's driving me. A future that's bringing me breakfast with my children, having family diner all day at 8 pm, discussing the day... Basically, family is something I'd like to be a shelter, that one and only place I always feel safe. The traditional family term is non-existant right now, but rather a future impression." (Paul; male, 24, student in his city/country of origin – Berlin/Germany)

"Family means generations of love and support. People that you will always be connected to no matter what." (Hannah; female, 23, student in her country/state of origin – USA/ Pennsylvania, one sister)

"Family is the people that you love unconditionally. When you love someone and expect nothing in return, that person is part of your family. Families share with each other, care for each other, and protect each other because of love. Family members can be related by blood or not related at all. No matter how the people are related, the genuine caring and concern for the other is what makes a family. It is love that holds a family together and the loss of love that breaks families apart." (Henry; male, 53, works in his country/state of origin – USA/Pennsylvania, married, one daughter)

"Basically, I consider family not only as relatives, meaning my parents, my brother, my granddad and grandmother. I link family too with close friends on whom I can rely on and talk to during hard times. Family is therefore a construct of both. My relatives are and always will be a major part of my life and daily thoughts. The mixture between relatives and friends is so intense that I cannot distinguish between them emotionally. I guess that is due to the fact that my brother and I always shared friends and still do. Moreover, I never separated friends and family in the first place. My parents often joined activities with my friends. That is why the terminology family is not only true for relatives but applies to friends as well. Family means backing me up, making me feel comfortable, giving me advice, being the lead when confusion takes over. Furthermore, family means tremendous fun, happiness, adventure and challenges, holidays from nine-too-five job. My family always will be straightforward with me and guides me sometimes with unpleasant speeches if necessary." (Markus; male, 26, student in his country of origin – Austria, one brother)

"The first thing that comes into my mind when I'm thinking about "family" is some sort of a parent(s)-child construction. But when I think about it longer and try to get more into the depth of this concept, I figure out that it is a lot more than that. Family for me is not necessarily mother-father-child/ren and maybe grandparents. It defines itself less by the persons included but more by the "feelings". Family means that there is someone, or even more people, that you can trust. You can fight with them like "hell" but you know you can always come back. Furthermore they might go on your nerves sometimes, or even most of the time, but you still love them and don't want to be without them - at least not all of the time. You might not see them for years but you still know they are your family you can come back to them, call them, write them every day and you will be always welcome. You can be yourself, grumpy in the morning, bitchy when you're premenstrual, they might tell you you're

annoying, but still you know they accept you how you are and will be there for you when you need it." (Laura; female, 25, born in Austria, works in the Czech Republic, two siblings)

"well family is a complicated issue, it can mean affection and annoyance at the same time! :) There is unconditional love, support, trust, solidarity from a family that no matter what you know that they will help you so they are more important than our friends in many ways. When I think of my family I remember the big family dinners, cousins, having fun, laughing, sharing secrets and a loving parents. But it can also put some kind of pressure, when one of the family members don't support your decisions or try to empose their thoughts, it can be annoying. There are also expectations about career, marriage, een which city you will live, that they tell their opinions and try to influence you. for my case, there is no pressure regarding my decisions, they respect my decisions but I know some of my firends have hard time because no matter how much they love and need their families, they can be 'stpid' sometimes adn don't get what you really need in life. They can be old-fashioned or too protective, interfere your decisions, etc. So it's a complicated matter. Nothing in life is black and white, so is family." (Bahar; female, 25, born in Turkey, studied in Sweden)

„familie... kann man sich nicht aussuchen, oder wie war das? dennoch finde ich, dass familie ein ziemlich großer begriff ist der nur schwer zufassen ist. es gibt für mich mal die biologische familie die sich für mich noch in ferne/weite und nahe/enge familie zerteilen lässt. beide typen sind für mich mit unterschiedlichen pflichten und erwartungen verbunden. so fühle ich mich meiner engeren familie mehr verpflichtet als irgendwelchen fernen verwandten. Genauso erwarte ich mir aber bei denen weniger. ich würde auch nicht unbedingt immer von liebe sprechen. bei einigen onkeln, tanten fühle ich gar nichts was ich mit liebe gleichsetzen würde. dennoch zähle ich die zur familie hinzu. dann würde ich diverse situationen in all diesen wohngemeinschaften in denen ich leben durfte als familiär bezeichnen. ich nenne das mal soziale familie. und selbst hier würde ich nicht liebe als bindendes band wählen sondern vielmehr vertrauen und geborgenheit. der begriff ist für mich irgendwie überstrapaziert und das traditionelle familienbild teile ich überhaupt nicht. familie ist für mich daher lediglich ein begriff mit dem sich menschen die einem näher stehen greifen lassen. wobei die grenzen aber recht fließend sind, weil man menschen eben unterschiedlich näher steht. wahrscheinlich wäre grenzzonen das bessere wort." (Klaus; male, 31, born in Austria, studies in Sweden, three sisters)

"So, family to me is a group of people that are usually, but not necessarily connected through a blood line, and develop tight socialization bonds within a larger society." (Pedro; male, 27, born in Mexico, studied abroad in Sweden)

"To me, the notion 'family' consists of those people I miss when I'm not together with them for an extended period of time. If this condition were applied generally, those who'd normally be considered 'friends' rather than 'family' could also be considered 'family'. Hence, more specifically, 'family' to me is the group of people with who I share common ancestry (via blood or marriage) and miss when I'm not with them for an extended period of time. Another qualification I might add to the notion of 'family' is that it consist of the group of people noted above and for which there is always either the possibility for forgiving its members or no need to forgive at all, no matter what they have done." (John; male, 30, born in Canada, lives in Denmark and studies in Sweden, married, one daughter)

"Family is the place or condition where you receive and give unconditional love, where you feel safe, welcome, taken care of and fully supported. you know that no external condition can change that." (Isa; female, 24, born in Moldova, studies in Sweden)

„Familie ist wie das eigene Rückgrat, man kann sich auf sie verlassen und wird selbst immer zu ihr stehen! Wie in jeder Beziehung gibt es schlechte bzw schwierige Zeiten, sowie Gute. Innerhalb der Familie verzeiht man sich aufgrund der familiären Bindung schon alles! Für mich bedeutet Familie alles!" (Lena; female, 25, student in her city and country of origin – Innsbruck/Austria, one brother)

"Family means unconditional love and trust, comfort, support ans understanding in any situation." (Sara; female, 24, born in Ukraine, studies in Sweden)

"family is very important. It is who you are, where you come from. Being together through thick and thin, enjoying the good times together and getting through the tough times as a group. Family is my homebase. It's the place to recharge my batteries. That is what family is to me." (Lukas; male, 29, works in his country of origin – Austria, one brother)

"Family.. family means to be home with people you don´t need words to communicate with.." (Marlene; female, 24, born in Germany, studied abroad both in the Netherlands and Sweden, one sister)

"Family means backup, imagination of security and confidence." (Herbert; male, 27, student in his country of origin – Germany)

"Family means to me to be at home at a safe place. But family means also unconditional love, so you can be as you are!" (Claudia; female, 24, student in her country of origin – Austria)

"Family - a group of people you feel comfortable with and can always be yourself with. The relationship is unconditional" (Anna; female, 26, works in her country of origin – Iceland)

"Family means the world to me. These are the people you love the most - and they will be there for you any time. Family is love!" (Maria; female, 27, works in her country of origin – Austria, two siblings)

"To me family are the only people yuo can trust when ever your in trouble. It´s an emotional support and the ones you realy care about." (Antonio; male, 25, works in his country of origin – Ecuador)

"Family is simply love, help and safety." (Carla; female, 25, born in the Czech Republic, studies in Germany)

"support group and friends, those who will always be around you even if you screw up royally" (Barbara; female, 24, born in Pennsylvania/US, studies in New York/US, three sisters)

"family are people who will support you regardless of what you do and look out for you and push you when you don´t know what you´re doing. family are people you can trust and confide in and who knows where you come from and how you´ve grown up." (Amanda; female, 25, student in her country of origin – Sweden)

"family are the once who can help you, and hurt you most..." (Hans; male, 23, student in his country of origin – Austria, no siblings)

"for me 'familiy' means an undefined bunch of people, related or not, to whom you can come anytime, everywhere without asking or explaining anything and as soon as you see them you feel at home, you feel understood and taken care of...and sometimes 'taken care of' means that they have to criticize you and to be honest even if they know it could hurt your feelings." (Viktoria; female, 25, student in her country of origin – Austria, one sister)

"family: the people who understand you. they don't have to be blood related, they just have to love you for you-all of you, the weirdness, the good things, when you're happy or sad. it's who you count on, you're there for, and who you want to be with. they're what makes life sweet" (Susanna; female, 24, born in the USA, studied in Sweden)

"For me, family are all of those people you can always count on, who you will always love and be loved incondicionally. They will hurt you sometimes, but they will always be there for you, specially during the hard times." (Maria; female, 24, student in her country of origin – Brazil)

"Family. Blood link at first. Then people who are intimate to you. The one you can rely on. They are the people who helped you since your childhood to build yourself, who brought you the education they wanted. Family can also refers to as a political family. Which means a group whithin the one you share same values and beliefs. In both cases it brings the same heritage." (Manon; female, 20, student in her country of origin – France)

„Familie ist einfach der Rückhalt, denn du nie spürst und erst erkennst, wenn du ihn wirklich brauchst. ich glaube familie ist eines der wichtigsten dinge im leben..." (Thomas; male, 23, student in his country of origin – Austria)

„Famile ist auch eine form von Schicksal - im positiven wie im negativen. Diese Ansicht findet sich z.b. bereits in der griechischen tragödie - z.b. Ödipus oder Antigone; und wird in dieser tradition explizit fortgeschrieben von S. Freud. Wenn man über Familie schreibt kommt man um Freud und die Psychoanalyse meiner meinung nach nicht herum (auch wenn

man nicht mit allem einverstanden ist). Das schicksalhafte an Familie ist, dass man ihr nicht entrinnen kann - selbst wenn man vor ihr davon läuft, wird sie das eigene leben massgeblich beeinflussen (so wie ödipus von seiner familie ausgesetzt wird, um dem Fluch zu entrinnen - und genau das führt dann genau dazu, dass er unwissentlich seinen vater erschlägt und seine mutter heiratet). In der Famile werden so von Generation zu Generation unbewußt auch psychische Konflikte weitergereicht (stichwort ‚Transgenerative Weitergabe von Traumata'). Ähnlich ambivalent kann auch die Weitergabe von Tradition, Einstellungen und Verhaltensweisen sein - es ist nötig und die wichtigste Persönlichkeits-Bildung; es kann aber auch als Zwang und Einengung bzw. seelische Verwahrlosung oder Folter gehen." (Johannes; male, 27, works in his country of origin – Germany)

"Family is such a hard thing to grasp. When I think of my family I see my upbringing, my roots, my home, my homeland, or just a constant in a chaotic life surrounding us . It reveals a simple but also earliest definition I have of myself, so I cannot get lost in the great world. I love my family, I miss them after a few days and I am going to give them a call if I can. Even though that calls get lesser with time as I move further away from home creating my own existence apart from this simple definition even though that it might be just nature, a balancing act of pushing and pulling of my loved ones allowing them their "breath" or space to life but also my own. I appreciate their input, I listen, I dispute, I try to be honest even though that I means that sometimes I more or less have to leave because I cannot stand their fixed ideas some themes. The world is changing. My family once was a big pool for problem solving and big community (extended family) but I feel it is not only me who is pushing a little further but more a common phenomenon. The one part of my family are the deeply rooted ones which do not even want to leave home and the other part (extended family included) pulls away further than ever making me wonder which way to go." (Roman; male, 24, born in Germany, studies in the US)

"family is a constantly evolving thing, of course I have my family in california which is my blood and kin,t he ones that will be there forever, but also as I have traveled and expierenced new places I have created family there as well, even if it is temporary, or perhaps I will never see and/or talk to them again (or in a long time). family doesn't alwasy have to be the popel you connect with the deepest or the poeple who know you the best, although it often can be, but it can also be a netowkr you create which supports you, a sense of security in a way,

everone needs to know that someone has got there back. I guess it's along the lines of kinship or something like that." (Carla; female, 26, born in the US, studied in Sweden, one sister)

"family is my parents and my sisters for now, but it could be a changing def bc it change in different stanges in life, so now it is my parents and sisters and later the definiton can extend. but def means poeple i can rely on trust, a ulimate lov or trust, one that last forever. Family mean home where I return from my travels, its sort of an orientation in the world." (Vivien; female, 25, born in Hungary, studied in Sweden, two sisters)

"Family the most Important people in my live. In a family you always take care of each other. But Family members are also allowed to Show you the mirror, to tell their thoughts you sometimes don't want to hear..." (Sophie; female, 24, student in her country of origin – Germany)