

## **Mother, Father, Child, Health – the History of Reproduction**

**Veranstalter:** German-Polish Society for the History of Medicine, Magdeburg; Centre for Historical Research of the Polish Academy of Sciences in Berlin; Institute for the History of Medicine and Ethics in Medicine at Charité, Medical University, Berlin

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In Poland, Turkey, and many other countries, we see that regulations of birth control are restricted under the influence of populist and right-wing parties. In contrast, we can detect self-empowerment of women fighting for their right to choose. Prior to these very recent political restrictions, reproduction has been the subject of debates on, for example, „marriage for all“ and „rainbow families“. This topic has socio-cultural implications with regard to medical progress, not to mention the intense debate around abortion. Although abortion was the main method of birth control in European societies at least until the spread of modern medicine, it has only been publicly discussed since the late 19th century. Moreover, since this time, it has become politized.

With the complexity of the history of reproduction in mind, the aim of the conference was to focus on the broad historical dimensions. Therefore, 22 papers historicized the impact of reproductive medicine on family and social policies, on religious and cultural ideals, on practices of family planning, and on family values. With a particular focus on the changing political, social, cultural and scientific relations between Germans and Poles, and on the corresponding interconnections in Central Europe, the conference contributed to a historical understanding of the role of medicine in the concepts of family and gender, as well as of the role of relevant socio-cultural institutions and medical development professionals. Due to the virtual format, the organizers divided the papers into smaller sections which were complementary

to each other and were arranged chronologically and according to their methodology. In this way, the participants' papers contributed to a comparative view on changing family values and their impact on reproduction and women's health in general.

The first section was dedicated to reproductive behavior and the agency of individual actors<sup>1</sup>. On the one hand, the focus was on the question of possible sources. KATERINA PIRO (Mannheim) used the example of first-person documents to impressively illustrate problems of source interpretation. For example, how can clues be found in diaries? On the other hand, statistical analyses of extra-marital births provide information about the relationship to marriage, but also to religion and social norms, as HADRIAN MICHAŁ CIECHANOWSKI (Toruń) discussed using the example of West Prussia. Another important source is advice literature and political statements published in (women's) magazines. In her contribution on the interwar period in Poland, ELISA-MARUIA HIEMER (Marburg) explained how the gap between rising liberation and conservative gender perception, and the instrumentalization of the nationality conflict in these writings, clearly influenced the sources.

The second section referred to the diverse discourses on motherhood and practices to promote reproductive behavior<sup>2</sup>. In the Second Polish Republic, motherhood was placed in the service of the Polish nation. Analyzing Polish texts and films, MAŁGORZATA RADKIEWICZ (Kraków) showed how much the image of the „new woman“ was influenced by the conditions of the new state. In order to promote reproductive behavior for the working „socialist woman“, numerous socio-political measures were taken to help children grow up healthily. Using Slovakia as an example, KATEŘINA LIŠKOVÁ (BRNO) discussed the measures taken to prevent child ne-

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<sup>1</sup>Reproductive Behaviour and the Private: Numbers and Meanings: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=mav2Qmia9c0&list=PL95WGtaJwqwC6hF6-03GMA4aTnFFQbst4&index=1>.

<sup>2</sup>Mother and Child: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=oBxmg796b9Y&list=PL95WGtaJwqwC6hF6-03GMA4aTnFFQbst4&index=2>.

glect and psychological deprivation in State-Socialist Czechoslovakia. Overall, however, it is clear that many problems occurred and countermeasures were put in place within the political systems. KAMIL ŚMIEWCHOWSKI (Łódź) illustrated this with the help of the instance of the debates on motherhood among female workers in Łódź during the 20th century.

The third section was devoted to political discourses on public health in the interwar period<sup>3</sup>. First, ALYS GEORGE (Vienna) used the example of the Viennese magazine „Die Mutter (The Mother)“ to show how reproductive knowledge and knowledge about raising and caring for children was communicated to a wider audience. Next, HEIDI HEIN-KIRCHER (Marburg) referred to discourses in the Polish-Jewish women's magazine „Ewa“ and explicated how such discourses were fueled by transnational transfer. She made clear that they were at the same time „colored“ through the respective national agenda.

Whilst this section emphasized the importance of the transfer of knowledge from experts to those affected, the next section took a closer look at the role of experts in the public sphere<sup>4</sup>. Using the example of the press published in Tarnów in the interwar period, MARCIN WILK (Warszawa) demonstrated that the expert also played an important role in the transfer of knowledge in these media. The German sexual reform movement played a special role in this. The Institute for Sexual Science in Berlin was pioneering in this area and corresponding institutions were opened in numerous European countries. Building on this, VERA LACINOVÁ NAJMANOVÁ (Pardubice) argued that despite a public debate on abortion, no comprehensive movement advocating birth control was able to develop.

The influence of family images on material culture<sup>5</sup> was then discussed by ALEKSANDRA JAKÓBCZYK-GOLA (Warszawa) on the basis of the example of the architecture of aristocratic palaces in the Polish-Lithuanian Rzeczpospolita Szlachecka in the 17th/18th centuries. During this period, a spatial, building-based separation of private and public life emerged. YULIA KARPOVA (Copenhagen) then showed how the design of utensils also changed in the 20th century

by comparing Russian and Danish samples and thus developments under the influence of state socialism and a Northern European Social Democratic State Model.

The next section focused on the important role of midwives and their ambiguous relationship to doctors from the early modern period to the second half of the 20th century<sup>6</sup>. Professional orders consolidated the special status of midwives in relation to doctors, as KATARZYNA PEKACKA-FALKOWSKA (Poznań) illustrated by using the example of Torun in the 18th century. Through their training, midwives developed a certain elitist behavior in the 20th century. However, measuring by means of the biography of Magarete Lungershausen, ANJA KATHARINA PETERS (Neubrandenburg) showed that midwives were involved in the eugenic practices of the Nazi health system, but their role was rarely questioned after 1945.

Intertwined expertise regarding reproduction was debated in the following section<sup>7</sup>. NATALIA JARSKA and SYLWIA KUŻMA-MARKOWSKA (Warszawa) explicated that church and state influence on family planning was very limited in practice. They explained the example of Catholic discourses on family planning between 1930 and 1957 in Poland, which ultimately did not reject „natural“ measures such as the „calendar“ method. Similar processes can be found for Slovakia between 1939 and 1945, as shown by DENISA

<sup>3</sup> Public Health and Public Discourse in the Interwar Period: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=AoXeJ2beb4U&list=PL95WGtaJwqwC6hF6-03GMA4aTnFFQbst4&index=3>.

<sup>4</sup> Experts and the Public in Reproduction Discourses: [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=SIVpaemT\\_1Q&list=PL95WGtaJwqwC6hF6-03GMA4aTnFFQbst4&index=4](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=SIVpaemT_1Q&list=PL95WGtaJwqwC6hF6-03GMA4aTnFFQbst4&index=4).

<sup>5</sup> Reproduction and the Material World: Architecture and Industrial Design: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2MI1QZwoUkM&list=PL95WGtaJwqwC6hF6-03GMA4aTnFFQbst4&index=5>.

<sup>6</sup> Midwives as Experts: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9Pi7xowNQG0&list=PL95WGtaJwqwC6hF6-03GMA4aTnFFQbst4&index=6>.

<sup>7</sup> Clerical, Political, and Medical Advice: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=f4pnuvDxu4U&list=PL95WGtaJwqwC6hF6-03GMA4aTnFFQbst4&index=7>.

NEŠT'ÁKOVÁ (Marburg). Family planning was elevated to a national affair by the right-wing conservative Hlinka's Slovak People's Party. The Slovak state tried to counteract birth control, particularly through social policy measures.

The next session was about abortion cultures<sup>8</sup>. BARTOSZ OGÓREK (Kraków) presented contemporary surveys and used the example of Poland to make clear that „abortion cultures“ had already emerged in the interwar period. Due to the liberalization of abortion in state socialism after the „thaw“, „abortion cultures“ developed in all state socialist systems following the Soviet Union. PAWEŁ KAŻMIERSKI (Mainz) compared and discussed the respective regulations in Poland and the GDR from a legal-historical perspective.

Fertility treatments and sterilizations formed another aspect of the conference's debates<sup>9</sup>. STEFAN JEHNE (Berlin/Potsdam) argued whether the sterilizations in the Soviet occupation zone of Germany and early GDR were ultimately a continuation and adaptation of Nazi „racial hygiene“, while MICHALINA AUGUSIAK (Warszawa) discussed the treatment of male (in)fertility during the People's Republic of Poland, attributing infertility to excessive alcohol consumption and thus integrating it into the discourses around alcohol.

Finally, the broad panorama of the relationship between motherhood and birth control in the late 20th century was analyzed by two contributors<sup>10</sup>. MICHAEL ZOK (Warszawa) showed that these discourses in Poland can be traced back to the end of the Second World War, whilst JULIA REUS (Bochum) used the example of sperm donation to explain how medical progress and family images had an equal impact on reproductive practices.

To conclude, the very convincing contributions and the subsequent discussions made clear that a comparative perspective is necessary to comprehensively understand the practices of human reproduction and societal behavior towards it. The discourses around abortion, family planning and family images were transculturally received and adapted in the European cultural space, each with its own nuances. Moreover, they led to the fur-

ther development of a modern image of the family and liberal, individualistic attitudes. Through the historicizing perspective, contemporary policies can be explained. Overall, important interdependencies were revealed between political, social and cultural history on the one hand, and the history of medicine on the other. However, these topics can by no means be regarded as fully explored by the contributions to this conference. On the contrary, tying together the different historicizing approaches during the conference will hopefully contribute to an in-depth investigation of the relationship between reproductive medical knowledge, family values, and family politics from a historical and comparative perspective.

The conference website provides access to the abstracts and the youtube-channel of the conference<sup>11</sup>.

#### Conference overview:

*Reproductive Behavior and the Private: Numbers and Meanings*

Katerina Piro (Mannheim): Fumbling towards Fertility Control: Fertility Decisions in German Ego-Documents 1800-1945

Hadrian Michał Ciechanowski (Toruń): Is Marriage so Sacred? Extramarital Births in West Prussia at the Turn of the 19th and 20th Centuries

Elisa-Maria Hiemer (Marburg): Divergent Narratives on Family Planning in Interwar Poland. An Interdisciplinary Approach to Historical Sources

#### *Mother and Child*

<sup>8</sup> Abortion Cultures: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=XR6uOAmeFeY&list=PL95WGtaJwqwC6hF6-03GMA4aTnFFQbst4&index=8>.

<sup>9</sup> Fertility and Sterilisation: [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=h2iUdJE\\_xuI&list=PL95WGtaJwqwC6hF6-03GMA4aTnFFQbst4&index=9](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=h2iUdJE_xuI&list=PL95WGtaJwqwC6hF6-03GMA4aTnFFQbst4&index=9).

<sup>10</sup> Silent and Noisy Revolutions: Discourses on Reproduction: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ZwWMwUGPKsk&list=PL95WGtaJwqwC6hF6-03GMA4aTnFFQbst4&index=10>

<sup>11</sup> <<http://www.cbh.pan.pl/de/online-conference-mother-father-child-health-history-reproduction>>; <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=mav2Qmia9c0&list=PL95WGtaJwqwC6hF6-03GMA4aTnFFQbst4>.

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Małgorzata Radkiewicz (Kraków): „A New Woman” as a Single Mother – in Essays, Popular Literature, and Films in the 1930s Poland

Kateřina Liřková (Brno): How to Bring up Healthy Kids. Changing the Understanding of Childcare in State-Socialist Czechoslovakia

Kamil řmiechowski (Łódź): Industrial Worker as Mother. Some Remarks about the Debate on the Motherhood of Workers in the Local Press of Łódź in the 20th Century

*Public Health and Public Discourse in the Interwar Period*

Alys George Vienna): Die Mutter (1924-26): Reproduction, Representation, and Women’s Public Health in Red Vienna

Heidi Hein-Kircher (Marburg): Debating Birth control in Polish-Jewish Contexts at the End of the 1920s: the Case of Ewa

*Experts and the Public in Reproduction Discourses*

Marcin Wilk (Warszawa): Girls into Women, Boys into Men: an Expert’s Discourse and the Press in a Medium-sized City in Interwar Poland. The Example of Tarnów

Veronika Lacinová Najmanová (Pardubice): Physicians as the Main Actors in the Debate over Birth Control in 20th Century Czechoslovakia

*Reproduction and the Material World: Architecture and Industrial Design*

Aleksandra Jakóbczyk-Gola (Warszawa): The Architecture of Sexuality

Yulia Karpova (Copenhagen): The Aesthetics of Biopolitics: Modern Design for Reproductive Healthcare in Denmark and Russia

*Midwives as Experts*

Katarzyna Pękacka-Falkowska (Poznań): City Midwives in Thorn/Toruń and Danzig/Gdańsk in the 18th Century: between Legal Provisions and Everyday Reality

Anja Katharina Peters (Neubrandenburg): Nurse, Midwife, Nazi, President – the Biography of Margarete Lungershausen (1892-1973)

*Clerical, Political, and Medical Advice*

Natalia Jarska and Sylwia Kuźma-Markowska (Warszawa): Love and Calendar: The Catholic Church and Family Planning in Poland (1930-1956/57)

Denisa Neřáková (Marburg): A Slovak Woman – the Mother of Slovak Nation?

*Abortion Cultures*

Bartosz Ogórek (Kraków): The Abortion Culture in Interwar Poland. Quantitative and Qualitative Study in Social History

Paweł Kaźmierski (Mainz): The Legal Abortion Regulations in the Soviet Occupation Zone / German Democratic Republic and the People’s Republic of Poland in Comparison

*Fertility and Sterilisation*

Stefan Jehne (Berlin/Potsdam): Continuity of „Race Hygiene”? Discourses and Practices of Sterilization in the Soviet Occupied Area and the Early GDR 1945-1961

Michalina Augusiak (Warszawa): „The Male Factor”. Sexological and Endocrinological Responses to Male Fertility and Infertility in State-Socialist Poland

*Silent and Noisy Revolutions: Discourses on Reproduction in Late 20th Century*

Michael Zok (Warszawa): „Reproductive Rights”, „Killing of Unborn Children”, „Pornography”. A Discourse Analysis of Changes and Continuities in Polish Debates on Reproductive Health and Sexuality before and during the Transformation

Julia Reus (Bochum): Brave New Families? Reproductive Practices between Medical Progress and Social Imaginings of Family Roles

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