

MOTHER, FATHER, CHILD, HEALTH – THE HISTORY OF REPRODUCTION

The 18th Conference of the German-Polish Society for the History of Medicine
co-organized with
the Centre for Historical Research of the Polish Academy of Sciences in Berlin
and the Institute for the History of Medicine and Ethics in Medicine of the Charité Medical University

online, 3–4 June 2021

Reproduction is a subject in the ongoing debates on “marriage for all” and “rainbow families” and has sociocultural implications with regard to medical progress, such as uterus transplantation, not to mention the decades old intense debate on the topic of abortion. The aim of the conference is to sound out the historical dimensions of these problems across a broad field where human biology, reproductive medicine, family policy, and government social programmes intersect with fundamental conceptions of desired or feared social developments which are projected onto religious and cultural ideals. Using the example of the changing political, social, cultural and scientific relations between Germans and Poles and the corresponding interconnections in Central Europe, a historical understanding of the role of medicine in the conceptions of family and gender, as well as of the role of relevant socio-cultural institutions and medical development professionals will be examined. The history of reproduction opens the floor for addressing fundamental questions about historical anthropology.

The conference will be held in English and broadcast online via Zoom. To register, please click here:

First day of the conference, [3 June 2021](#)

https://zoom.us/webinar/register/WN_vkYNUWRSQ7KZStNV23hoOA

Second day of the conference, [4 June 2021](#)

https://zoom.us/webinar/register/WN_2QOYo7E3RImXvt6vu-yHEw

Streaming live without registration will be available on the [YouTube Channel](#) of the Centre for Historical Research of the Polish Academy of Sciences in Berlin:

<https://www.youtube.com/channel/UClwPse-otpiAwNlo6nh1Ug>

The project is supported by the German-Polish Foundation for Science.

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Day 1: Thursday, 3 June 2021

09.00–09.30: Opening

09.30–11.00: *Reproductive Behaviour and the Private: Numbers and Meanings*

Fumbling towards Fertility Control: Fertility Decisions in German Ego-Documents 1800-1945

Katerina Piro (University of Mannheim)

In the research on reproduction, the perspective of the actors is usually incomplete. Researchers feel that there is a lack of sources and instead focus on discourse analysis (Dienel, 1995; Jütte, 2003; Heinemann 2019) or divorce proceedings and abortion cases (Arni, 2004; Osborne, 2007). Private letters, diaries, and biographies have not been studied extensively to find out more about the attitudes on fertility decisions. In my ongoing PhD study (currently in the writing phase), I have taken the longitudinal approach, looking at German diaries and letters from 1800 until 1945. The writers are middle to upper class men and women (N=65). Some of the main challenges are methodological: how can the heterogeneous sources and unique single cases best be compared? How to not mistake self-presentation for practice?

The sources, both archival and published, ask for close readings, as the authors comment only occasionally and cryptically on their own situations during their family formation periods, voicing wishes or fears and attitudes towards other people's families. Admiration for large families was voiced more often in the earlier decades of the sample period, while 'stopping' or early miscarriages were welcomed, except when childlessness loomed. Economic or political considerations, while sometimes expressed, did not lead to controlled fertility behavior and were usually voiced ex-post. Discord between partners was disclosed more in the latter period.

Men and women sought to control their fertility in many different ways (by keeping track, using contraceptives, and staying abstinent; by seeking medical advice or care and practicing superstition). The breadth and inconsistency of attitudes and actions across the period hint at a fumbling towards fertility control by a class that was so far considered to have been the 'motor' of the fertility transition (Weber WuG, 1972; Pfister, 1985; Ehmer, 2013).

Katerina Piro, M.A., is working on her PhD thesis at the University of Mannheim (Economic History) on the topic of *Family planning during the Fertility Transition in Ego-Documents*. She received her M.A. as a double diploma at the Universities of Bourgogne and Kassel and her B.A. at the University of Waterloo, Canada. She published an essay on *Kinderwunsch im Krieg* in the *Yearbook for Economic History (JWG 2/2018)* and another on *Bewusste Familienplanung von Pfarrehepaaren um 1900* in the conference volume: Conrad, Anne (Hg.), *Spannungen. Religiöse Praxis und Theologie in geschlechtergeschichtlicher Perspektive*, St. Ingbert, 2019.

Is Marriage so Sacred? Extramarital Births in West Prussia at the Turn of the 19th and 20th Centuries

Hadrian Michał Ciechanowski (Nicolaus Copernicus University in Toruń)

European culture has traditionally been strongly associated with religion. The Catholic and Protestant churches had a powerful influence on people's attitudes. The Church was also the bearer of national ideas. This was particularly evident at the turn of the 19th and 20th centuries in the Polish lands divided during the partitions between Austria, Prussia, and Russia.

The turn of the century was also a time of a revival of Christian spirituality in the German Empire, particularly in the Kingdom of Prussia, where a turn toward the Church occurred among both Protestants and Catholics. This change was fundamental in the lands of the Prussian partition, where German and Polish culture and corresponding religious practices were particularly active. This territory was also the area where Jewish culture developed and where particularly active migrations from the Kingdom of Poland and Austria took place. All these factors created a specific cultural mix at the Prussian borderlands.

One of the main elements of the teachings of each Church was issues of morality, particularly sexuality and marriage. Officially demonstrated religious devotion, however, was not always reflected in the actual conduct of the population.

Contrary to official ideology, official public documents, especially the civil status registers created by the Prussian state, reflected the actual attitude of the population to the question of relationships and sex. Based on the analysis of registers from selected register offices operating in West Prussia, the paper will present the phenomenon of extramarital fertility concerning particular religious groups. The data obtained from archival materials will be confronted with the literature on the subject. Historical and statistical methods will be used in the study.

It is worth emphasizing that the initial research indicates a relatively high percentage of births by unmarried couples. A comparison of individual religious groups shows that the smallest number of extramarital children were born in the Jewish community. In contrast, the most significant number were born among Protestants.

Hadrian Michał Ciechanowski, PhD, is an Assistant Professor at the Faculty of History at the Nicolaus Copernicus University in Toruń, Poland. His scientific interests include the history of Kingdom of Prussia in the 19th century, history of administration, public registers, and archives.

Divergent Narratives on Family Planning in Interwar Poland. An Interdisciplinary Approach to Historical Sources

Elisa-Maria Hiemer (Herder Institute, Marburg)

I consider reproduction a subject of three domains: political, social, and – most important – private. This contribution asks about the state constitutive character of social politics and its narration presented in marriage guides, political decisions, statements in newspapers, and NGO positions. A close reading analysis stresses the national(istic) wording and normative understanding of “the Polish family” and its supposed duties. These expectations diverge widely from the actual private sphere: I will refer to witnesses’ testimonies in abortion cases in the Polish-Lithuanian borderland of Suwalki, a region that after World War I was also subjected to border disputes between Russia, Poland, and Germany. I aim to show how testimonies mirror the social conflicts and prevailing gender perceptions of their times: The cases show not only a gap between the arising liberation and conservative gender perception, but also tell us about the instrumentalization of ethnic conflicts during the trial meant to discredit a person whereas this did not play any role in the private contacts in daily life. In contrast to Hayden White’s position that it is the researcher that makes the (hi)story, I argue that that the historical records themselves have their own narrative; they are – as Matías Martínez and Christian Klein (2009) put it – “narrations of reality” that can be examined with interdisciplinary methods such as collocation analysis or a close reading approach.

Elisa-Maria Hiemer, PhD, worked at the Institute for Slavic Studies at the Giessen University, focusing on Polish and Czech literature and culture from 2013 until 2019. She received the Giessen University’s award for the best PhD thesis in humanities for her work about recent Polish-Jewish and German-Jewish literature. She is currently preparing a handbook of Polish, Czech, and Slovak Holocaust literature within a trilateral project. Since April 2019, she has been working as a postdoctoral researcher at the Herder Institute in the project *Family Planning in East Central Europe*. Her main research interests are gender discourses in literature and culture, autobiographic writing, comparative literature, and Holocaust Studies.

11.30–13.00: *Mother and Child*

“A New Woman” as a Single Mother – in Essays, Popular Literature, and Films in the 1930s Poland

Małgorzata Radkiewicz (Jagiellonian University, Kraków)

In 1918, Poland regained its independence after a 123-year-long period of partitions. One of the very first decisions taken in the newly reborn country was granting women the right to vote. That emancipating law doesn't appear to be directly related to motherhood and the policy of reproduction; however, it underscores the agency of women in the modern era, in which the term “new woman”, which had already been used towards the end of the previous century as an antithesis of the Victorian concept of femininity, took on a real meaning.

In my paper, I would like to analyse selected examples of Polish written texts and films from the 1930s that address the issue of motherhood. I am particularly interested in the figure of a single mother, either presented as a self-conscious “New Woman”, or as a woman excluded from the society and punished for her irresponsible behaviour. Both female intellectualists and popular writers and filmmakers tried to educate their readers/viewers and make them aware of the health and social aspects of reproduction. That is why they created complex psychological portraits of women, deeply rooted in the social context, addressing the issues faced by modern women, their rights to work and live independently, and their emancipation efforts, inspired by the writings of Polish feminists of that era, such as Paulina Kuczalska and Irena Krzywicka.

Prof. Małgorzata Radkiewicz is an Associate Professor in the Institute of Audio-Visual Arts at the Jagiellonian University, Kraków, Poland. Her work deals with issues of contemporary cinema and arts, analysed in terms of critical theories: feminism, postcolonialism, posthumanism, and new materialism. She is particularly interested in the analysis of women's expressions in film, photography, and arts, mostly in Poland and other East and Central European countries. She published a book about women filmmakers (2001), and another one on Polish cinema of the 1990s (2006). In her monograph *Female Gaze: Film Theory and Practice of Women Directors and Artists (Władczyni spojrzenia. Teoria a praktyka reżyserek i artystek, 2010)* she addresses the issue of women's cinema and arts in terms of feminist theory. In her other book: *Faces of Queer Cinema (Oblicza kina queer, 2014)* she analysed selected films dealing with the issues of queer, sexuality, and gender. In her last book, *Modern Women on Cinema (Modernistki o kinie, 2016)*, she presents Polish female film critics of the 1920s and 1930s, quoting original articles and archival materials. For details on her research check: <http://pionierkizkamera.blogspot.com/>.

How to Bring Up Healthy Kids. Changing the Understanding of Childcare in State-Socialist Czechoslovakia

Kateřina Liřková (Masaryk University, Brno)

Expertise was at the heart of the transformation of modern societies, including the state socialist ones. In this paper, I will analyse the pivotal role experts played in Czechoslovakia in moving the public and policy discourse from unambiguous support for women's emancipation in the 1950s to a rather traditional women-as-caring-mothers outlook that became typical in the 1970s.

In 1948, Czechoslovakia, together with other Eastern European countries, set on a path to socialism, which also stressed the relevance of women's emancipation. Communist governments across the region swiftly changed laws and sought to implement policies that would put women on par with men, as workers as well as spouses and co-parents. Czechoslovakia also built facilities that would help women participating in paid labor outside of the home. Nurseries and kindergartens took care of the ever-growing number of children, and experts were around to monitor the situation and suggest improvements.

While in 1960, child psychologists and pediatricians still held that betterment of institutionalized childcare was possible and proposed detailed changes, three years later, the same experts came out with the book *Psychological Deprivation in Childhood*, highlighting the lasting damage that befell those infants who were cared for institutionally as opposed to the care by their mothers. The documentary, *Children without Love (Děti bez lásky)*, released the same year by the Czechoslovak television and featuring a child psychologist and a pediatrician, captured the imagination of the broader public with vivid portrayals of children who, as the documentary explained, could not flourish even with the best hygienic conditions, medical oversight, and technical equipment if they could not establish a lasting emotional relationship to one person – the mother. The documentary juxtaposed images of children in families happily exploring the world around them, articulate and smiling and in constant contact with their mothers – with shots of hordes of children in infant homes, constantly fighting, demanding contact with random adults, babbling mono-syllabic words, or just absent-mindedly staring into the camera.

I will show how this shift in expertise around childcare occurred and what a profound policy change it inspired. While some might view discursive shifts surrounding early childcare as “a humanizing trend in approaching children”, it becomes clear that this “improvement” came at the expense of one group more than any other: women.

Kateřina Liřková, PhD, is an associate professor in sociology at the Masaryk University, Brno, Czech Republic. Her research on gender, sexuality, and the social organization of intimacy was published by Cambridge University Press in the monograph *Sexual Liberation, Socialist Style: Communist Czechoslovakia and the Science of Desire, 1945–89*, which won the 2019 Barbara Heldt Prize for Best Book and received an honorable mention for the 2019 Adele E. Clarke Book Award. Currently, she embarks on a new project researching healthy mothers and normal children, as they were constructed by expertise in state-socialist East-Central Europe. More at <http://sexocom.fss.muni.cz> / <https://muni.academia.edu/KaterinaLiskova>

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

Kamil Śmiechowski (University of Łódź)

Łódź, which developed during the 19th and the first half of the 20th centuries from a small town to a city with over 600,000 inhabitants in 1939, was one of the largest industrial centres in Poland – the biggest textile centre in the whole Eastern Europe. The textile industry of the city resulted in a huge increase of women participating in the labour market. In fact, there were parts of the industry where women were almost exclusively employed. Under these circumstances, the image of a worker's families and the position of women in the life of the family in Łódź were much different than e.g. in mining or steelworks centres in the industrial region of Upper Silesia. Public opinion was strongly concerned about the impact of labour on female workers. Problems including early motherhood, abortion, lack of hygiene, infectious diseases, and street children were seen in Łódź in much more expressive ways than in any other big city in Poland. These issues led journalists and scientists to focus on moral panic, exaggerating the way in which the problem was presented and idealizing all improvements.

In particular, I will be interested in the changes and persistence of certain ideas and views despite the changing political realities. I also want to analyse the practice of moral-panic discourse connected to the problem of workers' motherhood in the local press in Łódź and its changes. However, analysis of the sources shows that some problems characteristic of the industrial city persisted throughout the "long century". Intuition suggests that the communist period should be characterized by a change in the perception of women's paid work and its connection with motherhood, which were questioned in the traditional society of tsarist Russia and interwar Poland. Unsurprisingly, after the political transformation, many of the old problems returned. Due to the unemployment and the poor hygiene and health condition of the city, the discourse from the 1990s began to resemble that from before 1939. Moreover, there was then a politicization of the issue of women's reproductive rights. Łódź was, therefore, a city in which the motherhood of female workers was problematized in a very interesting way. Its experience illustrates the struggle with modernity in the Polish and Central European context.

Kamil Śmiechowski, PhD, is an Assistant Professor in the Institute of History at the University of Łódź. His research interests are focused on urban theory, analysis of press discourse, processes of modernization in the 19th and 20th century Poland, and the history of Łódź. Recently, he concluded a post-doctoral research project on urban discourse in the Kingdom of Poland at the turn of the 20th century, supported by the National Science Centre in Poland. Lately, he has published *From Cotton and Smoke: Łódź – Industrial City and Discourses of Asynchronous Modernity 1897–1994*, Kraków – Łódź 2018 (with Agata Zysiak, Wiktor Marzec et. al.).

14.00–15.30: *Public Health and Public Discourse in the Interwar Period*

The League of Jewish Women of Wrocław and Its Activities in the Field of Reproductive Health Protection and Health of a Woman and Her Child at the Beginning of the 20th Century

Izabela Spielvogel (Opole University of Technology)

The Wrocław branch of the League of Jewish Women (*Jüdischer Frauenbund Ortsgruppe Breslau*) was founded on 6 October 1908. The association grew out of the traditions of Jewish charities and was based on programmes that the pioneers of the movement proposed as a feminine approach to their place in the Jewish community. The organization's statutory goals focused, among other things, on promoting and supporting the idea of equality of women in public life, access to electoral rights, but also assistance in the postpartum period, basic help in reproductive health, and bold and open discussion about e.g. Jewish prostitution or venereal diseases. These demands were particularly reflected in the projects of a social assistance nature, including medical assistance, which stressed the important role of women in society and the idea that simple and practical reforms improve the position and living conditions of women. As a result, for example, care and treatment places were created for unmarried mothers condemned by society. There were centres for Jewish girls at risk of prostitution and kindergartens for the children of those women who wanted to take up a professional career; midwives and community nurses were provided with assistance in neonatal care. The structure of the organization was based on departments that focused on work in different areas. The girls' ward started its activity on 26 October 1913. During World War I, many displaced, poor Jewish girls from the East, mainly from Galicia and Poland, were admitted to the department. It became an important task to take care of them so that they would not fall into the clutches of prostitution. The founders of the association pointed to the legal status of women in Judaism as one of the reasons for Jewish prostitution, claiming that Jewish divorce laws, among other things, significantly contributed to the increase in the number of women engaging in prostitution. During World War I, many men left their homes and never returned. Women remained *agunot*, or "wives chained to their marriage", unable to remarry without an official Jewish divorce, which requires the man to divorce his wife, not the other way around, or demands Jewish witnesses to the husband's death. A larger department, dealing with healthcare and leisure (*Erholungsfürsorge*), was formed from the Home Care unit (*Hauspflegegruppe*). The activities of this department focused primarily on supporting the health of the women and their young children. Among its initiatives, one should mention the following: medical and paediatric care (also for unmarried mothers), medical consultations (also for prostituted girls), nursing care during confinement, and learning how to care for newborns. As far as nursing aid was concerned, within the structures of the League of Jewish Women in Wrocław, nurses worked in all institutions of the organization. Moreover, there were also community nurses who joined the group on behalf of the community in April 1914. Their tasks were to coordinate home care, supervise women after difficult deliveries, take care of newborns, organize visits to the doctor, and purchase medicines.

Izabela Spielvogel, PhD, is an Assistant Professor at the Department of Biomedical Basics of Physiotherapy at the Institute of Physiotherapy, Opole University of Technology, and an art historian. Her scientific interests focus on health sciences: physical medicine, spa treatment, the history of spas, and medical history in the context of the Jewish community. She is the author of scientific and popular science publications and monographs on medical history, spa medicine, and balneology.

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

Alys George (University of Vienna)

“Red Vienna”, arguably interwar Europe’s most daring experiment and greatest success in comprehensive municipal socialism, placed mothers’ bodies at the very heart of its biopolitical ideals and reforms. This presentation is the first study of the biweekly Viennese periodical *Die Mutter: Halbmonatsschrift für alle Fragen der Schwangerschaft, Säuglingshygiene und Kindererziehung*. A short-lived publication (December 1924–September 1926), *Die Mutter* filled a key niche in popular medical knowledge about motherhood, reproduction, and women’s health and hygiene in Vienna between the wars.

Several other periodicals from the same timeframe took motherhood and women’s public health as their subject matter. These included Catholic monthlies such as *Das Blatt der Mutter / Die junge Mutter* (1929–35), *Die Frau und Mutter* (1912–67), and the *Elisabeth-Blatt* (1906–38). Meanwhile, the bimonthly *Mitteilungen des Österreichischen Bundes für Mutterschutz* (1911–19) was the official publication of the Social Democrat-aligned *Österreichischer Bund für Mutterschutz* (Austrian League for the Protection of Mothers, 1907–34), whose original tenets focused on improving the lives and advancing the rights of unwed mothers and their children.

The magazine *Die Mutter* shared many of the League’s concerns, yet was independent and sought to reach all mothers through print journalism. A bestselling, prize-winning author and screenplay writer, Gina Kaus (born Regina Wiener, 1893–1985), was its founder, editor, and champion. Kaus’s first editorial announced the periodical’s credo: “In our magazine, we want to give every serious woman – even the poorest, most uneducated, most exhausted from work and living in the countryside – the opportunity to hear directly from experienced paediatricians and gynaecologists”. The magazine’s audience, in other words, was conceived of democratically, cutting across class and party lines. It aimed to give all mothers direct access to the city’s best medical experts. The topics covered included not just women’s health, pregnancy, and birth, but also questions of reproductive rights, pedagogy, and child psychology, particularly influenced by Alfred Adler’s individual psychology, of which Kaus was an avid student.

This presentation investigates the nexus of reproduction, representation, and women’s public health in the pages of Kaus’ neglected, yet important Viennese periodical. Moreover, it contextualizes *Die Mutter* within wider Red Viennese public health, hygiene, and educational initiatives, so many of which set their sights on women’s bodies and reproduction as the keys to a utopian vision of a better future society.

Alys George, PhD, is a Franz Werfel Postdoctoral Fellow of the Austrian Federal Ministry of Education, Science, and Research (BMBWF) and a Resident Fellow at the Ludwig Boltzmann Institute for Digital History (Vienna). She received her PhD from Stanford University, was Assistant Professor of German at New York University (2011–2020) and Affiliate Faculty of NYU’s Center for European and Mediterranean Studies. Her book, *The Naked Truth: Viennese Modernism and the Body*, was published by the University of Chicago Press in 2020, and her published articles and essays cover literature, film, photography, dance, and medical humanities. The recipient of teaching awards from both NYU and Stanford, she teaches Austrian and German cultural history, literature, and visual culture of the 19th, 20th, and 21st centuries.

Debating Birth control in Polish-Jewish Contexts at the End of the 1920s: the Case of *Ewa*

Heidi Hein-Kircher (Herder Institute Marburg)

At the latest since the World War I, population policy debates have been conducted with verve. On the more individual and societal levels, discourses on the “obligation to give birth” challenged the power-related attitudes towards families. The previous neo-Malthusian and eugenic arguments continued to have an effect on the understanding of reproduction, which was further rationalized. These developments, and particularly the German birth control debates, were strengthened by the sexual reform activists and the transnational discourses during the last years of the 1920s. Under the conditions of the new Polish state, “birth control” was politized in Poland, too. An important but still not explored example of transnational networking and reception of the German birth control debates are the Polish debates at the end of the 1920s and their reception by Polish-Jewish *Inteligencja* and female journalism. The paper will discuss the reception of the debates, particularly in *Ewa* in 1928–33, which was the most popular Polish-Jewish weekly for women and was embossed by Zionist attitudes. It regularly reported on the international women's movement and the debates on sexual reform and birth control. One of its influential writers was the Zionist member of parliament Róża Melcerowa, who used eugenic arguments to explain the necessity of the two-child system and also supported the eugenically racial-hygienically motivated German demands for marriage certificates as a “colossal benefit” both for the bride and groom and “for society as a whole”. The paper will hence reflect to what extent these discourses influenced the Polish-Jewish and national (Zionist) agenda during a period of growing anti-Semitism. On the other hand, it will show that individualistic and women's emancipatory aspects played an important role in the discursive development of a modern and normative understanding of family planning within these circles, too.

Heidi Hein-Kircher, PhD, PD, earned her M.A. and PhD at the Heinrich Heine University in Düsseldorf. Since 2003 she has been on the research staff of the Herder Institute for Historical Research in East Central Europe in Marburg, Germany. Since 2009 she has been the head of department Academic Forum. In her research, she is generally interested in Polish history and in Jewish and minority history of the 19th and 20th centuries, and is working on democratization, nationalizing, and securitizing processes as well as on East Central Europe as a conflict region. Since 2019, she has been the project leader of a comparative structured project on the history of family planning as a transnational value in Eastern Europe.

16.00–17.00: Experts and the Public in Reproduction Discourses

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

Marcin Wilk (Polish Academy of Sciences)

The aim of the presentation is to identify expert discourses in press narratives in a medium-sized city in interwar Poland. The processes of modernization and emancipation in Poland accelerated after 1918. New knowledge about the human being, his gender and sexuality, was often created as a result of scientific discoveries. However, such issues as models of sexual behavior or expectations towards e.g., “female youth” and “male youth” were also regulated by the voice of public opinion. One of the basic tools for expressing opinions in the society in a medium-sized city was the press. In the newspapers, next to local reports, one could read opinions about old and new social ideas and praxis. In this way, the voice of so-called experts – people recognized as experts in a specific field, spread to the local community. Who was an expert for public opinion in interwar Poland? What parts of expert discourse permeated the press? What made them audible?

Analysis of the local press in this regard provides information not only about the cultural and social specificity of a certain region, but also allows us to get an idea of the mechanisms of knowledge processing in the community of a medium-sized city. The research area selected was interwar Tarnów, which developed intensively between 1918 and 1939. People came there from small villages and towns to study or work. Tarnów was often left in order to continue education or take up other paid work. There were also schools and cultural life developed. Located in southern Poland, Tarnów was an example of a typical for that time in Poland Polish-Jewish town of medium size, which was at the same time a kind of gravity center.

Marcin Wilk, M.A., prepares his PhD thesis on social history in interwar Tarnów under the supervision of Prof. Katarzyna Sierakowska at the Institute of History of the Polish Academy of Sciences. His research focuses on the social history of the 19th and 20th centuries and gender history.

Physicians as the main actors in the debate over birth control in 20th century

Czechoslovakia

Veronika Lacinová Najmanová (University of Pardubice)

In the first half of the 20th century, the issue of birth control became an integral part of political, professional, and public debates in many (not only) European countries. Despite fears of depopulation, the idea of birth control gained many followers and often resulted in social reform movements. National and international organizations were established to promote a healthy and detabooed sexuality, contraception or decriminalization of abortion. Especially for women birth control was crucial, because it allowed them to decide freely about their maternity and sexuality. But the feminist aspect was only one of many perspectives in the debate on contraception, along with medical, social, demographic eugenic and other.

In Czechoslovakia, birth control began to be discussed in public, too. Physicians, demographers, philosophers, clergy, politicians, and representatives of feminist organizations expressed their attitudes towards birth control. In the 1920s and 1930s, left-wing female politicians have tried several times unsuccessfully to enforce the decriminalization of abortion which opened the debate on contraception as a better option for fertility control. In 1930s several contraceptive education organizations have been established by women activist. Nevertheless, it was not women but experts, especially doctors, which had finally the main influence in the discussion on contraception. The aim of the paper will be, with the help of analysis of press and professional literature, to present the main features of the discussion about birth control in Czechoslovakia in the first half of the 20th century and to show how doctors entered this discussion and began to dominate it.

Veronika Lacinová Najmanová, M.A., earned her M.A from the Department of Gender Studies Charles University and the Department of History of the University of Pardubice. She is a PhD student at the Department of History of the University of Pardubice and the topic of her dissertation is *Birth Control Movement in First Half of 20th Century Czechoslovakia*. In her research, she is generally interested in women's history and gender history especially in the late 19th century and the first half of the 20th century. Among the subjects of her recent projects were gender in medical manuals of the second half of the 19th and early 20th centuries and gender aspects of the Czech eugenic movement in the first half of the 20th century.

17.15–18.15: *Reproduction and the Material World: Architecture and Industrial Design*

The Architecture of Sexuality

Aleksandra Jakóbczyk-Gola (University of Warsaw / Polish History Museum)

The image of sensuality in early modern Poland was characterized by tension and internal contradictions. Roman Catholicism encouraged purity, abstinence, modesty, and rejection of worldly desires. These attitudes were encouraged through Catholic teachings and sermons, but also through literature, which was seen as an important tool for the shaping of moral character. This sobriety was in strong contrast with the attitudes commended by the physical, expressive, and dynamic culture of Sarmatism, according to which virility, sexual appetite, and temperament were considered desirable traits.

The family provided the remedy for the frustration born of the opposition between accepted moral truths and natural urges and desires. Within the confines of marriage, passions and desires of intimacy could be pursued freely. The manor house provided the scenery for the passions and intimate desires of the commonwealth nobility. The architecture of the manor house gave expression to cultural norms which governed the roles of men and women and the relations between them.

In this presentation, I will analyse several treatises concerning architectural theory, which were compiled in the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth in the 17th and early 18th centuries. We can observe the emergence of specialized buildings, and of a clear division of the private and public spheres of the household. Women oversaw the spaces which were hidden from guests to the family. Women appear in architectural treatises only in the framework of specific practices and customs. Realization of these practices required the existence of suitable quarters in the house. These were connected predominantly to the health and hygiene of the manor's inhabitants. In this talk, I will discuss two different aspects of gender and sexuality as they appear in 17th century Polish architectural treatises: first, the culture and customs that governed issues of intimacy; second, the ways in which spatial planning was used to accommodate them.

Prof. Aleksandra Jakóbczyk-Gola is an Assistant Professor at the Department of Artes Liberales at the University of Warsaw and a senior curator at the Polish History Museum in Warsaw. Her research focuses predominantly on medieval and early modern Poland (10th to 18th centuries). She is particularly interested in the history of Polish collections, architecture in the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth, Neoplatonism in philosophy and aesthetics, the connection between Neoplatonism, astrology, and alchemy, communication through works of literature and art, flora and fauna in symbolism, Romanesque sculpture, medieval lyrical songs, and relations between Eastern and Western Christianity.

The Aesthetics of Biopolitics: Modern Design for Reproductive Healthcare in Denmark and Russia

Yulia Karpova (University of Copenhagen)

In my paper, I would like to introduce my new project that aims to bring together design history, history of medicine, science and technology studies, new materialism, and material feminism. I am at the initial stage of research on the aesthetics that united complex designed environments of modern reproductive healthcare. It considers women (and also transgender and intersex people designated as female by medical experts) as users of environments designed for performing biopolitics, and as actors in design processes. By “designed environments” I mean, following the definition offered by Joan Rothschild, architecture, urban planning, and product, industrial, and graphic design. By “reproductive healthcare” I mean health services directed at maintaining the reproductive and sexual well-being of (predominantly female) citizens – the well-being as defined by the state and medical communities. These services include gynaecological examinations, prenatal care, obstetric aid, and maternity care, and, from the 1970s and 1980s, fertility treatment and assisted reproductive technologies (ART). My research question examines how different experts worked together in embodying biopolitics in design and expressing it through images, and how the resulting designed environments impacted women’s lives over the long period from the 1920s to the 1990s. My hypothesis is that diverse elements of designed environments – buildings, furnishings, medical tools and screening instruments, and posters and flyers propagating normative sexuality and maternity – were united by certain sensory and visual qualities that I call “the aesthetics of biopolitics.”

Yulia Karpova, PhD, is a postdoctoral researcher at the University of Copenhagen. Her research interests include: history of the 20th century Soviet and European art and design, socially responsible design, material culture studies, new materialism, feminist design critique, history of medical architecture, biopolitics in modern Europe, design for reproductive healthcare in Europe and the Soviet Union/Russia in the 20th and 21st centuries. She has published: *Comradely objects: Design and material culture in Soviet Russia, 1960s–80s* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2020); *Visions and Visualization of Sustainability: Leningrad Designers in Search of Nationwide Recycling System, 1981–84*, in: Aga Skrodzka, Xiaoning Lu, and Katarzyna Marciniak (eds.), *The Oxford Handbook of Communist Visual Cultures*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2020); “‘A Glass without Bottom’: Neodecorativism in Soviet Applied Art in the Late 1960s”, *Journal of Design History*, vol. 3, no. 1 (2017), pp. 1–15.

Day 2: Friday, 4 June 2021

09.00–10.30: Midwives as Experts

City Midwives in Thorn/Toruń and Danzig/Gdańsk in the 18th Century: Between Legal Provisions and Everyday Reality

Katarzyna Pękacka-Falkowska (Poznań University of Medical Sciences)

In the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth, midwives straddled the line between public and private and formed one of the most prominent female occupational groups. Only in the early 18th century, the growing number of town councils in the Crown and Lithuania began to draft specific regulations for licensing local midwifery. In turn, in Royal Prussia (or Polish Prussia), the first information about licensed city midwives paid by the municipal authorities comes from 1581. Over the next two centuries, the *Stadtrate* of Danzig, Thorn, Elbing, etc., put a lot of effort to regulate and oversee maternity care together with its female providers. The *Hebammenordnungen* ordinances for local midwives (*Hebammen und Beifrauen*) provide historians with numerous information, how town councillors, municipal physicians and surgeons, jurymen, etc., fit these female practitioners into their understanding of gender norms, gender roles and gender divisions of labour. In this context, also the issue of midwife education is vital. Unlike in the Crown or Lithuania, in Royal Prussia the professionalization of midwifery through schooling began in the mid-18th century. E.g., in Thorn, in the 1760s, the local *Stadphysici* tried to implement the regulations of the St. Petersburg school for midwives, but this was to no avail. In turn, in 1781, the Danzig city council issued a draft of a new *Hebammenordnung* and, at the same time, it appointed a local *Hebammen-Meister*, a physician employed and paid by the municipal authorities to preside over obstetric matters in Danzig. Shortly thereafter, also an official school for midwives was founded. In this paper, I will analyse the 18th century statutes for city midwives in Thorn and Danzig and the rationale for issuing them. On the one hand, I will give an account of Danzig and Thorn city midwives' duties and privileges. On the other hand, I will focus on their ambiguous relations with city physicians, surgeons, quacks, judges, female patients and male family members. I will also answer how the directives of the town authorities and medical hierarchies shaped the midwives' work and training. Consequently, the analysis will explore the dynamics of urban midwifery practice and the urban midwifery structure in the largest cities of Royal Prussia.

Katarzyna Pękacka-Falkowska, PhD, is an Assistant Professor at the Department of History and Philosophy of Medical Sciences and the Poznań University of Medical Sciences. Her research interests include medicine and natural history in the 17th and 18th centuries, cultural exchange between Royal Prussia and the German lands, cultural exchange between Royal Prussia and the Low Countries.

Between Public Health Services and their Clientele: Midwives in Poland in the First Half of the 20th century

Elżbieta Kassner (Leibniz University Hannover)

In my presentation, I will focus on the profession of midwives as an important part of the history of medicine in the Polish context of the 20th century. By describing the introduction of uniform obstetric standards and the midwives' struggles for professional and social recognition during the Second Republic of Poland (1918–1939) and in the first few years after the Second World War (1945–1950), I will show how their areas of competence and practice as mediators between public health authorities and their clients were modelled by health policy actors and adapted to population policy objectives.

Adopted in 1928, the Midwives Act enabled midwives' associations to upgrade their profession. The State guaranteed midwives a wide range of skills: from care during pregnancy, childbirth, and postpartum, to breastfeeding and first aid in the event of complications. Consequently, the practice of midwifery evolved from a service provided among neighbours, to a professional activity guaranteeing the right to regular remuneration. As the statutory regulation also incorporated midwives into the public health system, they became central actors in the implementation of population and health policy goals.

Through the professionalization and incorporation of midwifery, the Polish state gained direct access to the private sphere and domestic environment of women and their families. In order to reduce maternal and neonatal mortality and, thus, contribute to the "biological" strengthening of the nation, midwives were responsible for promoting healthy behaviour and the implementation of hygiene standards through counselling, educating, and instructing mothers. They were also tasked with helping to reduce the number of lay birth attendants -"babkas"-, who had been identified as responsible for high mortality rates due to abortions.

The question of "biological" national existence, which played an important role in the 1918 re-establishment of the Polish state, returned to the political agenda in 1945. It was during this period that the State developed and implemented a plan to reorganize the socialist health system. For obstetrics, this reorganization led to nationwide, centrally controlled hospitalization and, for midwives, the increasing fragmentation of their activities.

Elżbieta Kassner, M.A., is a PhD student under the supervision of Prof. Barbara Duden in the Institute of Sociology at the Leibniz University Hannover. Her research interests include history of the midwifery, medicine and social history of the 19th and 20th centuries, motherhood, parenthood, reproductive health, and biopolitics.

Nurse, Midwife, Nazi, President – the Biography of Margarete Lungershausen (1892–1973)

Anja Katharina Peters (Hochschule Neubrandenburg)

Margarete Lungershausen, a trained nurse and midwife, was one of the few select alumnae of the study program for chief nurses at Leipzig women's university. She became chief midwife at the gynaecological hospital in Gdańsk/Danzig and later at Brandenburg gynaecological hospital in Berlin-Neukölln. The hospital became one of the leading centres for forced sterilizations under the eugenic health system of the Nazi regime and Lungershausen was not only a member of the hospital's management, but also an early Nazi party member and leading functionary within the Nazi midwives' association.

After the war, she became an influential figure within the re-found German Nurses Association, becoming their president in 1953.

Research for this paper was done as a side issue of my doctoral thesis about the Reich midwives fuehrer Nanna Conti (1881–1951) and while researching the history of the functionaries of the German Nurses Association from 1933 to 1948, commissioned by today's German Nurses Association. Sources include records as well as publications and letters by Lungershausen.

In my paper, I will use the example of Margarete Lungershausen to discuss the elitist attitudes of midwives from the educated middle class in the first half of the 20th century, the embedding of midwifery in the eugenic health system of the German Reich 1933-1945, and the policy space a midwife from this social stratum could gain for herself.

Anja Katharina Peters, PhD, is a registered nurse and a researcher of the history of midwifery and nursing, the history of the deeds of nursing as well as the (self-)perception of nursing in comic and historical postcards.

11.00–12.30: Clerical, Political, and Medical Advice

Doctor Sofia Parfanovych and Popular Reproductive Medical Advice in Interwar Lviv

Kateryna Ruban (New York University)

Sofia Parfanovych's works constitute exciting material for a case study of the history of reproduction in Central Europe in the first half of the 20th century. Born in Lviv in 1898, Parfanovych was one of the first women admitted to study medicine at Lviv University and graduated with a specialization in "women's diseases." Dr. Parfanovych entered the field of male doctors who were producing new knowledge about female bodies and their reproductive function. In the interwar Lviv, both the Polish state's healthcare policies and national communities' initiatives (like the Public ("Ukrainian") Hospital) were based on the ideas of social hygiene and cultivation of the "healthy body and spirit of the nation," particularly through women's health campaigns. Doctors like Parfanovych medicalized the projects of modernization and politicized certain medical conditions of mothers and children ("degeneration"), putting them at the center of nationalist political aspirations.

Doctors aimed to define what a woman was chiefly through maternity, seen both as an "animalistic instinct" and "consciousness," according to Parfanovych. In the late 1920s and 1930s, Parfanovych wrote numerous articles in the Lviv press about women's reproductive health, the "most important national treasure," as she put it. Her brochure *Man and Woman: Sexual Life* (1928) appeared in a popular series for a broad audience and treated sexual life and childbirth solely as a matter for medical advice. In her writings, women were considered simultaneously the most important for the health of the nation and the most backward part of it. In 1939, Parfanovych published her major 570-page work, *The Hygiene of Woman*, a scholarly work aimed at a broad audience. Her writings reveal the key tension of modernization projects in general: while she constantly argued for women's emancipation and individual freedom (she supported the legalization of abortion), she advocated for more power of medical experts and the state over female bodies.

Kateryna Ruban, M.A., is a PhD candidate at the Department of History, New York University. Her research interests include the history of medicine and public health, theories of gender and the body, biopolitics, Marxism, and the history of the Soviet Union and Ukraine.

Love and Calendar: The Catholic Church and Family Planning in Poland (1930–1956/1957)

Natalia Jarska (Polish Academy of Sciences)

Sylwia Kuźma-Markowska (University of Warsaw)

This paper seeks continuities and discontinuities, similarities and discrepancies in the Catholic Church's reaction to and teachings on family planning during two time periods usually separately analysed in Polish historiography. We begin with the pivotal encyclical *Casti Connubii* that since 1930 defined the Catholic Church's position on contraception, and we cease our scrutiny in the mid 1950s when abortion was liberalized in Poland (1956) and when in 1957 a state-sponsored social organization, The Society of Conscious Motherhood, began a state-endorsed family planning campaign that provoked the Church's vehement reaction to the birth control idea and practices. While the Church's post-1956/57 family planning politics have already been examined (Jarska, 2019; Kuźma-Markowska, 2019; Kuźma-Markowska and Ignaciuk, 2020), the earlier decades remain an under-researched period worth detailed scrutiny.

Our intention is to compare the Catholic Church's reaction to and teachings on birth control during the decade of the Church's imperious influence in the 1930s with the Stalinist years, when despite its relatively weaker position, the Church still shaped the outlooks of the Catholic laity on contraception through sermons, pre-marital instruction, or popular Catholic periodicals. Using the materials produced through these venues, we will examine the themes present in the Church's teachings, paying attention to their gendered dimensions, the emphasis put on love and marriage, and the instructions of "natural family planning" based on cycle observation popularly referred to as "the calendar". Finally, we will try to establish whether the same or different persons shaped the Church's position on contraception in the pre- and post-war years.

Natalia Jarska, PhD, is a historian and an Assistant Professor at the Tadeusz Manteuffel Institute of History of the Polish Academy of Sciences in Warsaw. Her research interests include women's and gender history, history of sexuality, and labour history in state socialist Poland. Her previous research projects are: *Women and Men in Marriage in Poland in 1939–1980* (National Science Centre), and *Intimate Life during State Socialism in Comparative Perspective* (led by Kateřina Lišková, Czech Science Foundation).

Sylwia Kuźma-Markowska, PhD, is a historian and Associate Professor at the American Studies Center of the University of Warsaw. She specializes in the 20th-century social and cultural history of the United States and Poland. Her areas of research include women's and gender history, transnational history of reproduction, and history of social movements. She has published on family planning activism in Poland and the United States as well as on the history of abortion and eugenics.

A Slovak Woman – the Mother of Slovak Nation?

Denisa Nešťáková (Herder Institute, Marburg)

Debates surrounding the issues of contraception and abortion, which existed throughout the first Czechoslovak republic, were forcefully silenced by the regime of the newly established Slovak republic after 1939. The ultimate goal of the ruling Hlinka's Slovak People's Party (HSPP), a right-wing conservative party with a strong Christian leaning, was to straighten Slovak families, and it was to be achieved by reducing the role of married Slovak women in the workforce, placing restrictions on female education, supporting marriages and natality, and demonizing any contraception. Abortions were strictly forbidden, and their performances were criminalized.

In my paper, I deal with the question of how Slovak political and religious elites explained the “traditional” role of women and the main duty of a woman – becoming a mother. The paper focuses not only on the legislative ban on abortions and contraception, but especially on the propaganda of the morality and sanctity of motherhood and demonization of methods of planned parenthood. In contrast to the state's propaganda of motherhood and interest in the growth of (ethnic) Slovak, ideally Catholic, population, the paper discusses the actual practices of family planning, contra-narratives, acts of protests, and criminal persecutions of women and men who broke the laws which intended to “protect” unborn children. By showing the state's decision that family planning should not be a private choice anymore, but a national affair, especially in the case of restrictions (criminalization of abortions and banning contraception), in my paper, I wish to look at “pro-natal” politics as a tool which is determined to fail, and thus can be seen as anti-(especially socially disadvantaged)-women policy.

Denisa Nešťáková, PhD, has worked since May 2019 as a research associate at the Herder Institute for the project *'Family Planning' in East Central Europe from the 19th Century until the Authorization of 'the Pill'*, focusing on Czechoslovakia. She studied history and Slovak language and literature at the Comenius University in Bratislava (Slovakia), and Jewish civilizations at the Hochschule für jüdische Studien in Heidelberg (Germany). In June 2018, she defended her dissertation thesis titled *Whoever is not with me is against me. Arab-Jewish relations during British Mandate for Palestine through the perspective of the German Temple Society* at the Comenius University in Bratislava. Her project *Women and Men in the Labour Camp Sereď, Slovakia* is carried out thanks to the post-doctoral grant of the Foundation for the Memory of the Shoah, Paris, France.

13.30–14.30: *Abortion Cultures*

The Abortion Culture in Interwar Poland. Quantitative and Qualitative Study in Social History

Bartosz Ogórek (Pedagogical University of Kraków)

The fertility regime that emerged in Eastern Europe during the Soviet period is often regarded to in a uniform yet simplistic term – “abortion culture”. The precise definition of this notion is hard to capture, but in general, abortion culture means that the society frequently practices the induced abortion as one of the basic methods for controlling the pregnancy instead of treating it as the “last resort” (Stloukal 1999). This approach to abortion results in abortion rates several times higher than in the countries of Western Europe. While the abortion culture is often considered the heritage of Communism, some scholars noted potential historical roots of this regime (Grant 2005), but mainly in a speculative manner. In this paper, I would like to look at the emergence of the culture of abortion in interwar Poland understood as its prevalence as well as cultural and socio-economic context perceived “from below” through the experience of “ordinary people” (Usborn 2007).

Hence, the main research questions are:

1. Is the incidence of abortion in interwar Poland comparable to the one after 1945?
2. Who were the abortion seekers, and what reasons for abortion did they mention?
3. What are the main socio-economic determinants of abortion?
4. Is abortion one of the “contraceptive” methods or rather the procedure used after the contraceptives failed?
5. How is abortion related to the gender power relations in the household?

The study is based on two kinds of sources. Macroanalysis makes use of official statistics on mortality and crimes published by the Polish Central Statistical Office. Microanalysis uses almost 200 questionnaires from the unpublished survey conducted in the 1930s by the Polish Institute of Population Issues. The statistical conclusions are reinforced with the analysis of published ego-documents, mainly the diaries and memoirs collected and disseminated by Instytut Gospodarstwa Społecznego. The obtained results are compared to the information derived from rich literature on induced abortion in other parts of Europe during the first half of the 20th century (e.g., Grossman 1978, 1995; Blécourt & Osborne 1999; Brookes 1988; Keown 1998; Szreter & Fisher 2010; Kling 2010).

Bartosz Ogórek, PhD, is an Assistant Professor at the Institute of History and Archival Research of the Pedagogical University of Kraków. His research interests include demography of fertility decline, historical demography, and standards of living in the past.

The Legal Abortion Regulations in the Soviet Occupation Zone/German Democratic Republic and the People's Republic of Poland in Comparison

Paweł Kaźmierski (Johannes Gutenberg University Mainz)

Abortion has long remained a controversial issue. The legal regulations must take an appropriate place between the reproductive rights of women and disapproval of abortion. After World War I, abortion was punished in the European legal systems. The famous writer Tadeusz Boy-Żeleński named this situation as a “women’s hell” (Polish *piekło kobiet*) in 1929, which made an important contribution to the public debate in Poland during the interwar period. In the Third Reich, abortion was even punished with a death penalty or a long prison sentence since 1943.

The abortion regulations were gradually changed in the post-war period. Abortion was already possible in the Soviet Occupation Zone, subject to specific circumstances. The unified regulations were introduced with the Law of 27th September 1950, which replaced previous federal state regulations in the form of an indication regulation. The breakthrough came with the “Law on the Interruption of Pregnancy” of 9 March 1972, which – notably – was the first not unanimously passed in the People’s Chamber of the German Democratic Republic. This legal act introduced a deadline rule – 12 weeks.

The Polish abortion regulations from the interwar period were retained by the communists in 1945–1956. This legal situation had been changed with the political change (Polish *Odwilż*) within the ruling communist party through the Law of 27 April 1956 when the deadline rule (12 weeks) was introduced.

The introduction of the deadline regulation had a huge impact on the Polish and East German population, especially in the number of interventions carried out. After the Peaceful Revolution, demonstrations against the Section 218 of the Criminal Code (StGB) were organized in 1990. In Poland, abortion was legally restricted in 1993. The relative social and political compromise was interrupted in October 2020 by the new judgment of the Polish Constitutional Tribunal.

Paweł Kaźmierski, M.A., is a junior member and scholarship holder of the Gutenberg Graduate School of the Humanities and Social Sciences at the Johannes Gutenberg University of Mainz. He graduated in law at the Jagiellonian University in Kraków and is currently finishing his postgraduate studies (Master of Laws) at the Johannes Gutenberg University of Mainz. His research interests are legal history, law and religion, comparative law, and contemporary history.

15.00–16.00: *Fertility and Sterilisation*

Continuity of “Race Hygiene”? Discourses and Practices of Sterilization in the Soviet Occupied Area and the Early GDR 1945–1961

Stefan Jehne (Humboldt University of Berlin/Leibnitz Centre of Contemporary History in Potsdam)

On 8 January 1946, the Soviet military administration in Germany (SMAD) abolished the Nazi sterilization law (GzVeN) in the Soviet occupied area (SBZ). In addition, the SMAD declared explicitly that the GzVeN had been a Nazi injustice. As a result, forced eugenics legitimized by the state ended officially, but in practice, we find discourses as well as practices concerning eugenically motivated sterilizations going on after the end of World War II. During the four years of the SBZ, for instance, medical doctors reported so-called *Erbkranke* to the responsible local state departments with the request for permission to sterilize the respective person. On the level of the central health administration, those informal requests were taken seriously. In several debates, the relevant officials analysed the pros and cons concerning eugenically motivated actions. In the end, they decided against blanket legalization of eugenic sterilization, not for ethical reasons, but because the Nazis had used it abusively. After the GDR was founded, the practice of sterilization requests continued, and health officials kept on demanding the creation of a sterilization law. For example, in 1950, the head of the medical department of the university gynaecological clinic in Rostock, Hans Hermann Schmid, and in 1958, his colleague from the department for social hygiene at Rostock University, Karl-Heinz Mehlan, both called for a sterilization law based on eugenic ideas at the GDR central department of health in Berlin. Mehlan was one of the most popular public medical scientists in the GDR and was connected internationally not only within the countries of the Warsaw Pact but held also ties to the FRG and the USA and worked for the World Health Organisation (WHO). Nowadays, he is mostly known for being the “father of the anti-baby-pill” in the GDR.

In my presentation, I would like to give an overview of the discourses and practices concerning sterilization in the SBZ and the early GDR. I want to figure out if those debates and practices have been a resumption of the NS “race hygiene” or if we need to view these as a new or “imported” version of biopolitical ideas from other countries and/or former political systems.

Stefan Jehne, M.A., is a PhD student at the Humboldt University of Berlin and at the Leibnitz Centre of Contemporary History in Potsdam. His thesis is focused on sterilization discourses and practices in the SBZ and GDR. His central research interests are the history of eugenics and biopolitics in the 20th century and the associated crimes.

“The Male Factor”. Sexological and Endocrinological Responses to Male Fertility and Infertility in State-Socialist Poland

Michalina Augusiak (University of Warsaw)

Despite the scholarly interest recently awarded to sexuality and biological reproduction under state socialism in Poland, only a few articles have explicitly analyzed how scientific discourses and the medical establishment approached bodies designated as male (e.g., Ignaciuk 2019). Nevertheless, the reproductive potential of male bodies was closely studied at the time, with the Fertility and Infertility Section of the Polish Gynecological Society holding separate symposia on male procreative issues. This paper analyzes expert literature on male fertility and infertility produced by sexologists and endocrinologists during the post-Stalinist period. The effort to re-establish the patriarchal family form, which began in the second half of the 1950s, included the simultaneous promotion and delineation of procreation. As a result, experts grappled both with male infertility and excessive or unruly fertility, understood in relation to the social realm outside of biological reproduction. The former was perceived as a physical unfitnes or hormonal imbalance which should be overcome for the patient to fully participate in marriage and society. The latter was more often recognized in relation to issues like alcoholism, with experts such as Jadwiga Beaupre convinced that high alcohol consumption could damage the spermatozoa and cause abnormalities in children, or future fatherhood, and thus should become a part of the institutional framework of forensic medicine.

Michalina Augusiak is an M.A. student at the College of Inter-Faculty Individual Studies in Humanities of the University of Warsaw.

16.30–17.30: *Silent and Noisy Revolutions: Discourses on Reproduction in Late 20th Century*

“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

Michael Zok (German Historical Institute Warsaw)

Ronald Inglehart stated in 1977 that value shifts in modern societies – he had changing attitudes towards sexuality in mind that he had observed during the 1960s and 1970s in Western Europe and the USA – are similar to “silent revolutions”: in his opinion, they develop often unnoticed to (contemporary) observers. Recent debates on reproductive rights as well as on the rights of LGBTI persons, abortion, Sex Ed, and contraception show that Inglehart’s characterization is not always applicable. Especially the current cleavages in Poland stress the impact and “non-silent” character of these questions.

The current disputes are not new. They can be traced back at least until the end of the Second World War. The paper will therefore analyse the discourse on reproductive rights in a long-term analysis and will concentrate on changes and continuities before and during the transformation.

Its aim is hence, first, by using the analytical method of (Foucauldian) discourse analysis, to highlight the boundaries of the “speakable” and to trace modifications of central concepts by major actors. One example is the term “Reproductive Rights” itself. It was heavily attacked by Catholic (lay) organizations and underwent a general reinterpretation. This development – as well as other ones – were not entirely Polish debates, as they referred to changes undergoing in other parts of Europe, and it underlines the significance of reproductive rights to the concept of a nation.

Second, as the last example shows, shifts in discourse can lead to changed functions and influence social life. Besides legal changes, they can also lead to alternations in attitudes in a macro-social context (e.g., the widespread acceptance of contraceptives in Polish society despite its condemnation by the Catholic Church). Therefore, the paper will analyse the changes in discursive positions of the actors and give an insight into their parameters that enabled (or disabled) them to influence social and legal processes.

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Brave New Families? Reproductive Practices between Medical Progress and Social Imaginings of Family Roles

Julia Reus (Ruhr University Bochum, DFG Project “Prekäre Verwandtschaft”)

The concept of family and sexuality, as well as their lived realities and associated reproductive practices, are changeable. Their discursive power is particularly evident in debates about deviation from the imagined ideal family and its “proper” reproduction. The widely celebrated progress in reproductive medicine and infertility treatments of the 1970s and 1980s appeared revolutionary, but they also triggered ambivalent interpretations of a “brave new family” between utopia and dystopia. Critics opposed the new domestic happiness of previously sterile couples with fears of the dissolution of family roles and considered the separation between sexuality and reproduction as unnatural. While opponents in the debate could generally agree on homolog insemination (within a marriage) as something tolerable, the donation of reproductive materials and surrogacy by third persons involved a huge potential for conflicts. In my paper, I will particularly focus on the desired social and biological relationships between the third person and the couple, and which opportunities and risks were commonly associated with known and unknown donors. When sperm banks started to appear in the FRG, the perceived danger of unknown and unintended incest between descendants appeared in public perception, even if experts thought the danger of unknown kinship ties unlikely. The surrogacy debate expanded these disputes and makes differences in the social valuation of motherhood and fatherhood, as well as gender ascriptions, emerge more clearly. These will be analysed alongside the contemporary negotiations of desirable and undesirable forms of kinship in the context of new reproductive possibilities and regulations.

In the face of new reproductive possibilities, the meaning of social and biological belonging, family ties and state regulations on family planning were renegotiated. This reveals their fascinating inherent paradoxes, which I will address in this paper based on my PhD-Project on discourses about incestuous relationships from a social, scientific and legal perspective.

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17.45–18.30: Comments, final discussion