



Honorary President's Column

Jan Trost

1999-2017

1999 Vol 25 (1)

The first international seminar of the CFR was held in 1954 in Cologne, at that time Federal Republic of Germany. Organizer was N. Andersen and I do not know anything about what theme they had for the seminar. During the 1950s another four seminars seem to have been organized by the CFR – where and who was the organizers we do not know. Some of those who have been around for a long time might know. For example, Joan Aldous, John Mogeey, Harold Christensen and, Gerrit Kooy might know. If you do: please inform us!

What we know is that the CFR officially became committee number six of the International Sociological Association (ISA) in 1959 – now there are more than 50 Research Committees of the ISA.

Since the first international seminars during the 1950s, the CFR has organized five seminars as well as the sessions at the ISA world congresses during the 1960s. During the next decade we offered six seminars and sessions at three world congresses. During the 1980s the number of seminars had increased to eight and two ISA congresses. This last decade of the century has shown ten seminars organized by the CFR and sessions at three world congresses.

Thus, during the existence of the CFR there have been 36 seminars, 32 during the 40 years as a committee of the ISA and also sessions at ten world congresses. Many of the committees of the ISA have been more or less asleep during their life time but the CFR has never been. And I hope it will remain awake for many more years.

JT

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1999 Vol 25 (2)

One of our senior members, Wilfried Dumon, retired from his position as professor at the University of Leuven, Belgium, last year. This celebration was a two-day event. Thursday December 3, 1998, a seminar was organized where each chapter of *festschrift* in honor of Wilfried was discussed, most of the authors were present. For example, Joan Aldous (USA), Salustiano del Campo Urbano (Spain), Gabriel Kiely (Ireland), Barbara Settles (USA), and myself. Friday the 4th, the university organized a ceremony in the University Hall in which we, a pedell, the rector, the dean, head of department (Koen Matthijs), invited professors (the same as the authors of the *festschrift*), and Leuven professors who came walking in dressed in academic robes. In the audience there were hundreds of people. A set of musicians played a number of pieces and speeches in honor of the newly retired were given by the rector, the dean, head of department and me, invited as representing the international scientific community. Finally, Wilfried gave his proper thanks for the honor shown him.

There were many nice things said about Wilfried and related to the CFR, for example: he has been an active member of the CFR for more than three decades, served as secretary/treasurer during two periods, 1974-1982, and some would say that he "was" the CFR during that period. He started the CFR Gazette in 1974 and organized the XIXth CFR-seminar on Divorce and Remarriage in Leuven, 1980.

Those who want a copy of the *festschrift* can contact Department of Sociology, van Evenstraat 2b, B-3000 Leuven, Belgium. Price: BEF 1,800:-, EURO 45:- or USD 50.- plus postage.

JT

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1999 Vol 25 (3)

Some comments on birth rates. In 1983 Sweden faced a historically very low birthrate, a total fertility rate (TFR) of 1.6. Politicians were upset and one could hear statements to the effect that Sweden was a society hostile to children and other unrealistic ideas. The Parliament made some changes to the social welfare system based upon the fact that there seemed to be no changes in the relative number of first and second children, but that third and fourth children had decreased. For example, the alimonies for the third child became 50 % higher than for the first and second. The TFR increased and reached a level more than 2.1 in 1990-91.

But, there was no need for a new political decision. With the ideology about the preferred number of children, the TFR would in the long run be about 2.4 if all women would have as many children as they wanted and no more. With new contraceptives available and used, women had as much children as they wanted. What is called delayed births, meaning few women have their first child when young, the probability for sterility among women as well as men increases.

Few women want a child when the marital relationship is bad or when divorced. Historically with many divorces and separations, some women will have fewer children than wanted.

This means the expected TFR in Sweden will fluctuate between 1.5 and 2.1 if my calculations are right or at least reasonable. After 1991, the birth rate decreased to 1.5. Thus, my prediction is the TFR very soon will increase again. This means the birth rate will occasionally come up to the magic 2.1 but the population will decrease (immigration and emigration not considered, neither changes in mortality rates).

What about, for example, Spain and Italy with birth rates as low as just above a TFR of 1? And other countries? The Gazette might be a good forum for exchange of experiences and interpretations.

JT

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2000 Vol 26 (2)

Now, when the XXXVIIth International CFR-seminar is over, it's hard not to write about it since my thoughts for a long time have been there about planning and now they are still there after some weeks. Sort of abstinence. And here comes some notes.

Officially, the seminar started June 20 in the evening – but in reality it started about two years ago when I promised to organize a second Uppsala meeting. Örjan Hultåker and I organized the first one and the theme was *Family and Disaster*, with our common background in family studies as well as in disaster studies. This happened in 1980 and was the XVIIIth international CFR seminar. All sessions and lodging took place in Rosersberg's castle outside of Uppsala.

Now 20 years later the sessions took place in one of the classrooms of Uppsala University's Language Science Center and lodging was organized in two small hotels, a five-minute walk from the sessions. My intentions were to organize a small seminar with about 25 participants, but Uppsala and the theme, *Theoretical and Methodological Issues in Cross-Cultural Family Studies*, seemed popular: more than 50 participants from 20 countries – truly international. In order to make the seminar efficient, the registration fee included lodging as well as all meals during the three days seminar.

In my opinion, also vented in this column several times, the CFR has too few young members and certainly too few student members. In order to change that situation, at least to some extent, I applied for financial support to students for joining the seminar. The money granted helped pay the registration fee (and thus the stay) for eight students and travel costs for some. Also, this money supported travel costs and/or registration fee for nine participants from countries with problematic currency situation.

Uppsala university and its *rector magnificus* gave a reception for us in the Chancellor's room of the university building and Department of Sociology hosted

one of the dinners. The Bank of Sweden Tercentenary Foundation and Swedish Council for Social research supplied the monetary support for the mentioned subsidies. Due thanks to all of them.

Some of the papers from the seminar were collected in a special issue of *Journal of Comparative Family Studies* after a blind review of all manuscripts in revised form submitted to me. Most presentations and discussions were of very high quality and one can therefore presume an issue of high quality as well.

JT

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2001 Vol 27 (1)

The Swedish Sociological Association has just celebrated a 40-year anniversary at Uppsala. To look at the program is kind of interesting from a family perspective. There were no session with a connotation to family studies.

What does this mean? Most of the participants are colleagues with a fairly new Ph.D. or they are doctoral candidates, but few full professors. Are they not interested in family studies?

When looking at the titles of the presentations in the program the picture is quite different. For example, in a set of sessions on gender perspectives one can find paper presentations like *Sociological Theory on Family Cohesion and Separations*, *Family Life and Work Life on the "New Work Force"*, and *Special Money in Families' Perceptions of Ownership, Entitlement and Ownership*.

In the sessions on sociology of health one can find presentations like *Reaching and Listening: Sexually Abused Street Children*.

Do we have a tendency to redefine the contents of scholarly studies, research, and education in the Western world? Clearly, it seems to be the case in Sweden. If what happened in Uppsala is indicative of changes going on elsewhere and about the future, family sociology as a scientifically labeled field might disappear. But family studies will go on to be an important field hidden under other labels.

Even if some labels are changing and some research is carried out under other umbrellas than that of family sociology, the colleagues as well as their research is welcome in the CFR. Many of the research committees, like ours, have many members who come from other disciplines than sociology. That's excellent from my perspective – and in line with the statutes of the ISA as well as of those of the CFR. All members of the CFR do not have to be sociologists and all do not have to classify themselves as family sociologists. What's important is that they work with and/or are interested in our field of studies.

JT

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2001 Vol 27 (2)

The CFR has been a very calm and peaceful organization over its more than 40 years. It was established as a committee within the frame of the International Sociological Association in 1959. According to my knowledge, Reuben Hill (University of Minnesota, USA) was the first president of the CFR. He remained so until the World Congress in Varna, Bulgaria, in 1970.

During the last few years of the 1960's some opposition came toward the fact that the board was never elected. From 1965 John Mogey (USA) was appointed secretary of the CFR and Reuben Hill and John Mogey ran the CFR until 1970. The opposition ended in 1969 when eventually Joan Aldous (USA) and some others wrote a draft for a constitution for the CFR. This became the constitution of the CFR in Varna – mainly the same constitution we now have. Gerrit Kooy (The Netherlands) was the first democratically elected president of the CFR with John Mogey as elected secretary/treasurer.

After them came Mogey as president and Wilfried Dumon (Belgium) as secretary, in 1978 the late Veronica Stolte-Heiskanen (Finland) came as our president, with Dumon still as secretary. Four years later Laszlo Cseh-Szombathy (Hungary) became president and Örjan Hultåker (Sweden) secretary. At the ISA Congress in New Delhi, 1986, I took over as president for eight years and Don Edgar (Australia) was secretary until 1990 when Barbara James (USA) took over for eight years. As we all know Barbara Settles (USA) has now been president for seven years and Irene Levin (Norway) is secretary.

When I became a member of the CFR in the beginning of the 1960s there were no real memberships. Invitation to attend the international seminars was on a personal level. That was changed with the new constitution aiming at guaranteeing all members (and now we were members by registration and paying our dues) the right to be informed about all of the activities of the CFR. Not only informed but also to have the chance to attend any of the seminars.

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The first international seminar I attended was held in Oslo in 1963, when I was a new assistant professor and fairly young. The membership has grown in age, which happens in almost all organizations if members remain members and do not drop out. But we need to recruit more young members. That kind of recruitment seems to have started when new younger colleagues with a doctoral degree are invited. It is good also that doctoral candidates join us.

As I wrote above, the atmosphere of the CFR's seminars have been peaceful and calm – I hope we will go on like that. Another trait of the seminars has been the emphasis upon high quality of both the presentations and the discussions. Sometimes they have to be tough in order to maintain quality.

2001 Vol 27 (3)

In November this year, I participated at the annual meeting of the North American organization National Council on Family Relations and especially its International section in Rochester, NY. We had a round table about the history and the future of the section. Historically, the section was founded in 1977 at the annual meeting that year in San Diego. The initiative came from a member of the CFR, Constantina Safilios-Rothschild, who had done a great job in convincing enough members of the NCFR board to accept a new section. She was supported by Bron Ingoldsby (who is also a member of the CFR), me and some others; she also took responsibility for the new section during the first two-year period as chair. (I took care of the next two years). Since then the section has published a newsletter with varying frequency and quality as well as organizing a number of sessions at the annual meetings of the NCFR. The CFR and the NCFR has also co-organized sessions as well as seminars.

During the discussions at the round table, I was asked about how I perceived the differences between the CFR and the NCFR International section. In my opinion, the main difference lies in the fact that the CFR through its members represents a very wide variety of countries or nations. The International section consists of mainly North Americans – and some few of us are foreigners. This means that the variety of perspectives is greater in the CFR than in the International section. My observation during the years, as a member of both organizations, is that the CFR represents not only more countries but also more true comparative studies, for example, by comparing two or more cultures or countries.

During these years the CFR and the NCFR International section have cooperated both at annual meetings of the NCFR and at the CFR international seminars. I hope we will renew this cooperation in the future.

Some of us are leaving soon our home sites in order to go to Brisbane. Many of the members of the CFR will not go, but I hope that we will see many of you all and many new members, especially younger colleagues. All over the world we who have been around for a while want that our various groups and organizations to grow younger and not older in composition. But with the low mortality rate, most organizations grow older if we don't fight against it. Somewhat paradoxical is that we (or almost all) hope to age properly and survive both as individuals and as organizations. At the same time we are eager that the composition of the aging CFR will not increase in age – that the older members will remain with a refreshment by many new members.

I have been a member of the CFR for almost 40 years and fascinated that the CFR has always been a warm climate. We have never faced any serious

conflicts within the organization. Long ago, some of us were dissatisfied with the lack of democracy. However, according to my evaluation, the critique was not directed at the leading “gang” (Reuben Hill, Harold Christensen, John Moge and some others) but against the of a lack of statutes. There was no counter action when Joan Aldous and some others in the early 1970's presented a draft for statutes, very similar to the statutes the CFR now has.

I hope that the good morale and cooperation will continue for at least another 40 years.

JT

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2002 Vol 28 (2)

Back again to Australia! The CFR had an international seminar in Australia many years ago, in 1984, we had the XXth seminar situated in Melbourne. The topic was *Social Change and Family Policy*. To my knowledge this was the grandest seminar we have ever organized with so many participants. Those of us presenting were literally on the stage in a big convention hall. The audience consisted of, as usual, colleagues but also lots of interested persons practicing social work, law and politics, to mention some specialties.

The organizer was *Don Edgar*, at that time Director of the Australian Family Study Center in Melbourne. The organization was perfect and beside the intellectual events we went to a sheep farm where we ate a lot of good food and drank some delicious Australian wine, which to many of us was a new experience – now those wines are common and also fully respected as should be. We also saw a poor sheep “freed” from all its wool.

At this seminar we introduced a new CFR-policy, which has become a tradition: all participants became members of the CFR, the four-year fee was included the dues for participating in the seminar's sessions. Since there were more than 200 participants, a good ground was formed for the financial stability of the CFR, from which we now gain.

This World Congress is also special for some of us and I am one of them: this is the tenth time I am going to an ISA international and world congress. My first was the VIth and held in 1966 in Evian, France. There I met some persons who became very good friends, one of them is Wilfried Dumon. The weather was fine, the food was excellent (of course since we were in France) and the site was not crowded – just some 2,000 to 3,000 participants. I am afraid there will be many more in Brisbane. But one issue will be the same: we will meet old friends and make new friends!

JT

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2002 Vol 28 (3)

In 1991, the CFR organized (i. e. Irene Levin and I did) the XXVIth International CFR seminar on the theme *What is Family?* At that time some previously suppressed countries made themselves free. As a result a couple of colleagues participated, who never had been able nor allowed attending our seminars. Their enthusiasm and curiosity was evident. We therefore decided to support this enthusiasm and curiosity.

At the same time the Swedish government decided to spend some money in order to support to the scientific cooperation between the Nordic countries and the Baltic States. In some of the discourses the term the Nordic countries even included and still includes Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania, the three Baltic States.

After some meetings, we realized that a somewhat formal organization had been born and we decided to give the child a name: The Nordic Family Research Network, NFRN.

Since 1992 we have met annually in Estonia, Finland, Latvia, Lithuania, Norway, and Sweden. The agenda has always been very informal and usually the participants have presented news on family matters in their home countries or anything else relevant and factual for the presenter.

The sites for the meetings of the NFRN have varied a lot. We have been in a coastal resort village in Lithuania, in an ex-sanatorium for miners in Estonia, in a cottage high up in the Norwegian Mountains, and of course in various cities.

The number of members of the NFRN is small and we have no formal organization with no statutes, no by-laws and no membership fee. There is not even a roster of members. Anyone who wants to join can do so and we all bring younger colleagues whenever feasible. At the annual seminars the number of participants varies between ten and 20.

Sorry to say, the financial support from the Swedish government has disappeared, but it was very supportive during a number of years – not only supportive but also necessary during the childhood years.

Our next annual meeting will probably be over when you read this. We will meet October 11–13 in Vilnius with Irena Juozeliuniene as our host and organizer. This annual seminar will be our tenth anniversary and thus the eleventh time we meet in this group where most of us have been participants all or almost all the years.

I might report about this seminar in the next Gazette.

JT

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2003 Vol 29 (1)

A big issue in today's Swedish mass media coverage (beside all disasters or near disasters) is connected to what nowadays is labelled "Singles" even in Swedish. Evidently the term is the same as the marital status of "single" (as if that would be

a marital status – it is more like a non-marital status). To be a “Single” or one out of many “Singles” seems to be a certain kind of life style. If I have understood the phenomenon correctly, “Singles” are mainly fairly young persons living in one-person households and they seem to be fairly well off. They seem to spend a lot of time dressed up in fancy bars and discotheques. I guess they are an offspring of the Yuppie-movement some decades ago.

I know of no good studies about this phenomenon and I would be very glad to receive responses from you, the members of the CFR. Does this phenomenon exist elsewhere and is it labelled the same way or how? There are some studies about persons living alone, but what I am interested in is the life style of those labelled “Singles”. I am not sure if the labelling is an outsider labelling or if the “Singles” identify themselves as singles. We are certainly not talking about all persons living in one-person households, but only about a relatively small fraction of them.

With my perspective the life style of “Singles” and the notion by mass media that they exist is also connected to what happened some decades ago when non-marital cohabitation came. Since then the marital status of single has become meaningless since most of those cohabiting are “single” (and quite a few are divorced or widowed). Cohabitation as a social institution has made LAT relationships possible and thus also might “Singles” become a social institution alongside marriage, cohabitation and LAT relationships.

JT

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2004 Vol 30 (1)

A couple of years ago the publishing house SAGE contacted *Bert Adams*, Madison, Wisconsin, USA, and me for a handbook of World Families. We accepted the offer and have contacted many of our colleagues around the world for manuscripts. Many of them answered positively and have done a remarkable job in writing many excellent manuscripts.

Beside *Bert* and me, the following CFR-members have been supportive in preparing manuscripts for the **Handbook of World Families**: *Fahad Al Naser, Fausto Amaro, Yu-Hua Chen, Wilfried Dumon, Hanneli Forsberg, Carol D. H. Harvey, Tomáš Katrňák, Ruth Katz, Daniela Klaus, Joav Lavee, Irene Levin, I. V. O. Modo, Ivo Možný, Bernhard Nauck, Rudolf Richter, Peter Somlai, Barbara Settles, Xuewen Sheng, Chin Chun Yi, and Susan C. Ziehl.*

The finished handbook will, according to the plans of the publisher, be introduced at the annual meeting of the National Council on Family Relations in Orlando in the middle of November this year.

All chapters will, as much as feasible, follow a specified outline made by Bert and me, which looks somewhat like the following:

A description of the area covered (size, population, geography, history & varieties within the society).

"Pairing up." This is a little broader than the typical "mate selection."

Fertility and socialization. This covers primarily how children are raised in that society.

Gender roles. While gender is important throughout each chapter, it needs a separate section covering work, power, communication, etc.

Marital relationships. This would include non-marital cohabitation and LAT relationships, as kinds of "marital relationships", as well as power, etc.

Family stresses and violence. A large variety of sub-categories.

Divorce/separation/remarriage. Remarriage after divorce or death.

Kinship. This includes property and inheritance.

Aging and death.

Family and other institutions. Primarily on politics and economics, but can include religion in those societies where this matters.

Special topics. This involves unique characteristics.

Personally I look forward to the book and I also hope that colleagues around the world will find this handbook worthwhile to be used.

JT

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2005 Vol 31 (1)

A new journal of interest to many was just launched. It is an e-journal, which means that it will not be paper-based. The name is Qualitative Sociology Review. I included here a statement from the editor, Krzysztof Konecki, who is Polish living in Poland.

All sociologists, for whom interpretative paradigm and qualitative research methodology are basic perspectives of a social world investigation, are welcomed to submit their articles and support our initiative. There will be published empirical, theoretical and methodological articles applicable to all fields and specializations within sociology. More information is available at: www.qualitativesociologyreview.org

JT

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2006 Vol 32 (2)

Now when I have been professor emeritus for some years, I have realized that my situation is almost totally different from those who are still in active and responsible ages. However, I am still working in writing articles and books, giving some lectures, supervising a number of students. But I have no regular responsibilities.

Beside the regular responsibilities I do not have and all lectures I do not give, I am lucky in another way. The struggle to "publish or perish" and the struggle to apply for and receive research grants or perish are both gone. During all my years I have tried to fulfill the three main tasks as a university professor, the task of being

at least a decent teacher, the task of publishing and thus showing attempts at trying to help science to move further, and the task of giving the surrounding community feed back via popular writing and giving answers to journalists.

I still try to fulfill these tasks, but I have no pressure from outside of doing so. In the last issue of *Symbolic Interaction* (29, 2006, 235 – 257) Philip Vannini has an article named Dead Poets' Society: Teaching, Publish-or-Perish, and Professors' Experiences of Authenticity. I highly recommend that article to all involved in the business. He has interviewed a number of professors of various ranks and shows some of the varieties he has found.

My reading is that we have not only the simple variation of those who try to see their authentic identity as both teachers and scholars and those who do not. Reality is more interesting and rich in variation.

JT

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2007 Vol 33 (1)

Before non-marital cohabitation came to our cultures norms were, at least officially, very strong against any visible love relationships between adults. Young people could and should show their interest to each other. But older persons should not.

Non-marital cohabitation broke the old norm which made the four elements strictly connected: the marital ceremony should come just hours before the two were allowed to move in together and they should not have sex together before that moment. The fourth element normatively connected was the expectation of a child to be born about a month after the marriage.

When non-marital cohabitation had become a social institution LAT relationships came and after a while also became a social institution. Had non-marital cohabitation not come, LAT relationships would probably neither have come as a social institution to be recognized at the end of the 1980s and in the beginning in the 1990s. In some countries this took a couple of decades and in other countries somewhat longer a time.

Besides the breaking of the normative elements so closely connected these changes also means that now there was more of a permission to show affection openly. The non-marital cohabitants started by living together which clearly meant that they showed the sign of having sexual relations. Even if pre-marital sex among couples in love was common before the changes they were still clandestine, especially if they were made apparent by a pregnancy. Non-marital cohabitation changed all that. Couples living in LAT relationships also clearly show affection. Is this relatively more openness of showing affection visible in other respects, too?

Sadly there is no good data on couple formation, going steady and cohabiting or LAT relationships. Therefore we have to be satisfied with marital statistics. I have checked official statistics in Sweden on marriages or "family formation" (as it still can be seen to be called) among older people. If we look at marriages among people aged 60 and over where both are of that age we find that there is a remarkable increase from 1990 to 2000 from 243 to 326, an increase with 34 per cent. In 2005 the

number was 703; an increase from 1990 with 189 per cent. If we would compare 2000 with 2005 we would find an increase with 116 per cent.

Since these figures are not from any sample but based upon population data there is no meaning to speak about statistical significance. However, there could be factors of chance that could influence these figures. At the same time the tendencies are so strong that I can hardly believe that so could be the case to any significant degree.

The norms were endogamous norms clear for women to the effect that they should not engage in emotional relationships with much younger men. Therefore, another indicator of the change toward more openness would be if older women nowadays marry younger men to higher an extent than previously. If we look at women 60 and above who marry men five or more years younger than themselves we find that in 1990 there were 29 marriages of that kind, ten years later the figure was 35 couples marrying – an increase with 21 per cent. In 2005 the number was 74 – an increase from 1990 with 155 per cent. And if we compare 2005 with 2000 we find an increase with 111 per cent. During these years the marriage rates have not changed much and thus there is no over all trend of increasing marriage rates.

My understanding to these changes is, as shown above, connected to a prohibiting norm system that has changed from the idea that older persons should not show affection toward each other. An example is that we nowadays can see many elderly couples walking hand-in-hand with each other – which we did not see some decades ago.

It might be worthwhile to notice that the younger generation was those fighting for the right to live together, for non-marital cohabitation, when the struggle went on. These were mainly those who belonged to the baby-boom in the 1940s. They fought for free love, for women to be equal to men, etc. They now belong to the category of 60+. Can it be so that they now have stabilized to the effect that they want more committed relationships than they fought for in their youth?

Another possible way to understand these changes could be that we now live longer and healthier and that mass media advocates for respect for elderly and their love life. The word ageism has come and shows a tendency in the same direction. Are these tendencies related? They might be.

Are the tendencies the same elsewhere?

JT

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2008 Vol 34 (1)

László Cseh-Szombathy, president of the CFR 1982 – 1986, has died.

He and I were good friends during many decades. I just want to tell two stories about him and me. One is about **food**.

During the years before 1990 the monetary situation was somewhat complicated for some of us. Without anyone of us ever saying anything about it,

the following happened: When we were in Hungary together László always decided where to eat, what to eat, what to drink and he paid the bill for both of us. And he was a real gourmet.

When we were together outside of Hungary the situation was reversed. I decided where to eat, what to eat, what to drink and I paid the bill for both of us. We never spoke about it. We never thought about it – I did afterwards. I don't know if László ever thought about it. We both acted spontaneously.

The other is about **stamps**.

László's wife Kathy was a stamp collector. I decided to subscribe to Swedish first-day-letters for her. But when I contacted the postal system I was told that Hungary had forbidden the Swedish system to send first-day-letters to anyone in Hungary. So, my solution was to subscribe myself to these letters and then I sent them by regular mail to her. This worked perfectly until she sadly died about ten years ago.

JT

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2008 Vol 34 (2)

Our international seminars are excellent fora for meeting nice colleagues and also for the official purpose of presenting ideas, have them discussed by friendly colleagues, listen to presentations and discussing them. The presentations and the discussions are all supposed to be based upon good scientific knowledge and practice.

It happens that some presentations are just of scientifically bad quality – that does not happen very often, but often enough. What should other participants do? Sit there listening without reacting? That happens very often. I guess that the silence is based upon various conscious or unconscious reasoning. One could be that the presentation is so embarrassing that some feel ashamed at being present and that they have not expected such low quality of scientific practice in our circles. Another could be that some of us are too polite to be nasty enough to criticize and discuss what is presented. A third possibility is that some believe that they have misunderstood what has been presented since “such strange things can be said and meant”.

Not reacting explicitly is on the other side also bad scientific behaviour since seminars are aimed at supporting each other. Therefore we should be more ready to criticize and discuss. We do not have to – and we even shouldn't – criticize in a negative tone or aggressively. But to the point and nicely. After all we are each others' mentors and tutors. (I know that I myself sometimes, some say often, sound very aggressive in such situations. The way I see it I just sound that way by speaking loudly. Usually I do not at all intend to be seen as aggressive.)

I look forward to the next seminar and to more open discussions. And hopefully there will be time for discussions.

JT

2008 Vol 34 (3)

The Lisbon CFR-seminar in September was interesting in many ways. And it was very well organized. One of the really unusual issues with the seminar was the attendance – at least in some respects. I organized three sessions on the theme of “Marriage, Co-habitation and New Families”. A long time before the seminar 15 abstracts had arrived, which was surprisingly many – and they came in good time before the dead line. The organizers had announced that they wanted to give us all a CD-disc with all manuscript for the presentations in advance in case the participants to be had sent a manuscript. Of my 15 presenters to be, 14 sent their manuscripts in good time. Since I have organized many seminars and many sessions I was prepared that some of the presenters would not show up at the seminar. *They all did!* That is the first time in my professional life when so has happened. And most of the presentations were very interesting and refreshing. Another surprising occurrence: All presenters in my three sessions kept the time limits I had given them.

Are we facing a new behaviour among our colleagues? Hopefully, so is the case.

JT

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2009 Vol 35 (1)

“Who are you, Jan?”

Some time ago a person asked me that question. What should or could I answer? I would reasonably not give a lecture on identity. So, I just said that I didn't know. The question remained unanswered and made me more and more dissatisfied. After some weeks I came to think upon what William James long time ago wrote in a letter to his wife: “*This is the real me!*” My understanding of his ideas is that he meant that our identity varies with the situation and thus is not singular but plural; identities.

I started writing short novels about my life, some very few pages long. They dealt with sets of occasions in my life from childhood and on. Some sets go over years, some over just an evening. They were labelled “Lennart”, “Loved to sing – couldn't”, “The acrobat”, “The chocolate factory”, “The lumber Jack”, “The first examination at the university”, “The receptionist”, and “The lie detector” to mention some few examples.

These short novels are now collected in an unpublished book. The other day I happened to look at it when a colleague came and told me about problems with her young children. She spoke about how much better parents knew and controlled their children half a century ago. Then I told her about my book on my own identities. Had my parents known, for example, what I did at the chocolate factory or as a lumber Jack they would have locked me in.

We as family sociologists are hopefully aware of how stable some issues are generation by generation. Social change goes usually very slowly when speaking about family matters. Already Socrates claimed that the youngsters were impolite, rude and not trustworthy.

JT

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2009 Vol 35 (2)

The World Congress of the ISA in 1966 was my first World Congress. Since then I have participated at all of the ISA World Congresses. Which means that the one in Gothenburg will be my 12th.

In 1966 the congress was held in Evian in France. At that time critique was raised at the CFR business meeting on the “undemocratic” system of the CFR. Claimed was, according to my memory, that there should be statutes of the CFR and that officers should be elected and not be chosen by some kind of brotherhood politics, nepotism.

Invitations to the international seminars organized by the CFR – or to be more correct: organized by the local organizers – were sent only to some of those who seemed to be of interest to the small group in power. Some of us were invited to the first seminar held in Oslo, and some to the first seminar in Japan.

A committee was formed with the task to suggest statutes and also organize a democratic election of officers for the CFR board. One of the members of this committee was Joan Aldous, at that time at the Department of Sociology, University of Minnesota, where also Reuben Hill was working.

After the acceptance of the statutes all members are invited to all seminars organized under the umbrella of the CFR – in case of need for a *numerous clauses*, the organizer decides who to be welcomed.

The statutes were accepted and a process of election came. At the World Congress in Varna, Bulgaria, 1970, Gerrit Kooy, Wageningen, The Netherlands, took over as the first elected president of the CFR. At the business meeting in Varna a membership fee was set to the amount of US \$40 per member and per four year period. We still have that membership fee (except for students who pay only 25 percent of the fee). Would we have followed the inflation the fee would now be almost US \$ 300! Hopefully, the fee will go on remaining at its nominal value.

JT

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2010 Vol 36 (1)

About forty years ago we faced a decrease of marriage rates, starting in Scandinavia and historically a rapid change came all over the Western world. As you all know – which we didn't know at that time – the decreases of marriage

rates did not mean that the dyadic relationships between men and women were disappearing. Non-marital cohabitation came as a social institution alongside or parallel with marriage.

Many other family issues changed at about the same time, for example, divorce rates started increasing and the age of women at first birth of a child started increasing. To have a first child at age 30 was very unusual and surprising – now it is fairly common.

In 1980 I heard about the *lat relatie* in the Netherlands – couples were living apart together and had become a social institution there. Not many years later I started distributing the term LAT relationship in international media and I coined a term for the phenomenon in Swedish: *särbo*.

Very rapidly the term and the concept was accepted and adopted in some countries and the term became a word in our family sociology jargon. But still the phenomenon is not made visible in many countries, while in some it is a social institution. And in many countries there is no term for it.

I have often argued that we are not very good at predicting changes in family matters. We were not able to predict the entrance of cohabitation neither of LAT relationships.

What will come next in the field of marriage and marriage-like phenomena? Maybe, what in Germany for many years has been labeled WG or *Wohngemeinschaft*. This means that a person has an apartment or a house big enough for more than one person. And someone else can live there, too. We are not speaking about just renting a room or so but a non-erotic living together, sharing kitchen, living room etc., but not bedroom. Could very well be the same or opposite gender. Journalists, who often are better at finding coming changes than we are, have dug up, for example, some well known media person who have “kicked out” the man and let another woman share her apartment/house instead of the man – friendship and not romantic love or shared sexuality. Will WG be the next step? Or what will happen?

JT

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2010 Vol 36 (2)

The 18th and 19th of November 2010 *The Jane Addams Conference on Social Entrepreneurship* was held in Uppsala. The background was twofold. About 20 years ago I started a seminar series for those in Uppsala who were interested in symbolic interactionism and other constructionist theoretical perspectives. This seminar

needed a name and we gave it the name *Jane* after Jane Addams (1860– 1935), one of the first symbolic interactionists. The seminar had meetings when it happened to be feasible or “needed”. After many years my friend and colleague Vessela Misheva took over as chair of the seminar and suddenly we had an assistant (one of the doctoral students) who now organizes meetings every three weeks.

A couple of years ago we discussed whether we should celebrate the 150th anniversary of the birth of Jane Addams. So we did. Money came from various sources and a conference was organized. Among specially invited participants/speakers were Mary Jo Deegan (University of Nebraska, USA), Mark Hutter (Rowan University, USA), Andrea Salvini (University of Pisa, Italy), Robert Dingwall (Nottingham Trent University, UK), Erik Schneiderhan (University of Toronto, Canada), Rita Braches-Chyrek (Bergische Universität Wuppertal, Germany), Miriam Adelman (Universidade Federal do Paraná, Brasil), Rudy Seward (University of North Texas, USA), and Wilfried Dumon (Katholieke Universiteit Leuven, Belgium).

This conference became very successful and many were those scholars from various disciplines attending. The plans are that we will each year organize a conference in honor of Jane Addams and in honor of someone who will be awarded a Jane Addams Award.

My hope is that even more scholars within the family field would have joined us and, as the optimist I am, I am looking forward to see more family scholars among us. After all, Jane Addams was not only a sociologist but she could also be classified as a family sociologist.

JT

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2011 Vol 37 (1)

Long time ago, meaning about sixty years ago, the CFR was inaugurated and very fast CFR became one of the most lively committees of the International Sociological Association, and number 6 from the start of the ISA. We have kept the record of being one of the biggest and most active committees.

At the beginning of the 1960s a renewed feminist movement came and in the circles of the CFR it was named the sex role movement. After some years the Sex Role Committee was accepted by the ISA and in 1974 at the World Congress in Toronto this committee was inaugurated. I wouldn't claim that there was any kind of break out from the CFR but some of us were supportive and even instrumental for the establishment of the Sex Role Committee, which later changed name to Women in Society, number 32.

The CFR has never been very concerned about youngsters even if we have organized sessions on youthhood, for example in Munich in 1987, *Family and Youth*. But already previously the Sociology of Youth Committee became one of the committees of the ISA, number 34.

To my understanding both sex roles (as they were called at that time) and youth belonged to the field of family studies even if we were not so much concerned about these areas. The same is true for childhood; in 1979 the CFR had a seminar in Helsinki on *Family and Child*. Later the committee on Sociology of Childhood came, which also has become an official committee of the ISA as number 53. As Floyd Martinson showed many years by studying 20 text books in family sociology, children were absent or if they were mentioned they were either connected to fertility or to problems. Ageing is another area traditionally a part of family studies. Early on a separate committee was established in the ISA, i.e number 11.

There are probably more committees with clear connections to family studies and we will probably face more to come. One never knows how many committees there is a need for.

When the ISA had its world congress in Uppsala in 1978 the Mayor of Uppsala in her welcome speech among other nice things said something to the effect that she had believed that sociology was sociology. But when she looked into the program of the world congress she found that there were more than 50 sociologies!

How many are there need for and how many will be active and lively?

JT

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2011 Vol 37 (2)

During the last weeks I have had a course in qualitative methods in our Master Program at Uppsala University. Students are coming from various parts of the world, for example one from Bosnia, one from the USA, one from Romania, a couple from Russia, about a dozen from China and about ten from Sweden.

We have especially been speaking about observations, sociometry and qualitative interviewing. And all students have exercised these three variations of qualitative methods, meaning that they have all trained to observe social reality, all have been collecting data via sociometry, and all have done a number of qualitative interviews.

When we came to the interview training I told them that the interviews should all be about family and the basic question for the interviews was "Who are members of your family?"

There were two reactions from quite a few of the students. One of the reactions was that the topic for the interviews was too sensitive. "You just can't ask people about their families! That's to go too far ethically!" The other reaction was that "Everyone in our culture means the same with family; there are no variations!"

The first reaction: I told the students to do what I required or they will fail on the course – after all they had chosen to take a course learning, understanding and *using* science. They all did and came back to class telling us all that there was no problem in interviewing about family. The "sensitivity" of interviewing on the topic of family did not exist when used in practice.

The second reaction: With the requirement, still as the background, they realized after interviewing that even within the same culture in social reality and in people's minds there are varieties in family patterns.

We all should know all this as family sociologists – so, why do I repeat what everyone knows?

All this reminds me about Peter Laslett who in the 1970s showed us that families including several generations had never as far as could be found existed as a social system at least not in the Western world. They had existed as social reality but not as social institutions or social systems. Many decades have passed since then and still you can hear some family scientists claim that they had existed as social systems in the Western world.

Some of us have argued and shown that to study people's family is no sensitive topic for those involved. Still you can hear not only students but also colleagues say and write as if it were. The same with the question about people's family: you still can hear not only students but also colleagues say and write as if people's definition of their own family would be fully culture bound.

Myths are living almost forever. The "truths" I have been writing about above might also become myths in a while.

JT

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2012 Vol 38 (1)

We are some who early, meaning several decades ago, have asked ourselves and others "What is Family?"

In 1991 the CFR organized an international seminar in Oslo with that theme (organized by Irene Levin and myself). At the same time Jaber F. Gubrium and

James A. Holstein published a book with the same title. At that time we did not know each other and thus we worked independently.

The question is still quite reasonable as can be seen in the president's column in the CFR blog recently. The way I see it, there is no reasonable answer to be given by any serious scholar of today. But, or and, the question still remains. Or, may be, we should or would say that there are plenty of answers.

In an article in *Family Review*, 1992, 41, 348-351, entitled "Understanding the Concept of Family" Irene Levin and I discussed three ways of looking at the term family. We did not intend to define the concept since there is no concept connected to the term — there are many concepts; the term homonymous. But we showed that in people's mind there is one concept knitted to the question "What is my family?", another knitted to the question of "What is a family?", and finally "What is the family?"

In some countries, like Sweden, there has been a tendency especially among politicians to talk about the need to care for the family. What do they mean? Mostly they do not at all talk about family but about minor children. Sometimes they talk about minor children and their parents. Also, mostly, these politicians are of religious background. But it seems as if the term family legitimizes their argument better than if they would speak out. The term family should not be used as a kind of a euphemism for something else (according to my humble opinion).

How are we family sociologists to handle this complex and also sometimes complicated issue of the meaning, the concept, of family? What are we studying? It can't be family or *the family*, can it? We could go on using the term as a vernacular, meaning without any specific concept attached to the term. That's what I would prefer us all doing, using the term family as a kind of umbrella for all varieties we might be interested in. In my column a year ago I wrote about all the varieties of family matters now taken over by other research committees of the ISA (to say that they have taken over might be an exaggeration; these areas still belong also to the CFR and its members).

JT

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2012 Vol 38 (2)

Import?

Some few days ago I visited a local theatre in Uppsala, my home town. The actors were nine young persons, high school and university students, with "immigrant

background". In the play we in the audience were told about their perception of Swedes' attitudes toward immigrants. And the effects upon the new immigrants.

The meaning of the term immigrant was part of the message of the play. We were told that the term started to be used some time ago for women who had been "imported" by men from their home country who had themselves immigrated to Sweden and the men were now their husbands.

Now the term has changed its concept. The meaning now, at least among the "immigrants" themselves, is that all of them are Imports. The play ended with the nine young persons' wearing black T-shirts with the text "Import?" in white letters. How long is an immigrant an Import? How long is a second generation Swede an Import? Or does it depend upon hair, eye and skin color? Or which country of origin we are talking about.

The play was written by the director based upon stories told to her by the nine actors. In the program she wrote: "The other day I was asked if I knew why the world is a globe. I answered that I did not know and was told that it is because no borders are supposed to be there!"

A very moving theatre play!

So, what has this to do with the CFR?

We are an international organization working in the same direction as shown by the play I saw and heard in my home town. Or are we working in the same direction? Or just not realizing that we constitute a political detail in our system? Some years ago when I was president of the CFR we were approached by a member living in a country with no democracy but a dictatorship. He invited us to organize an international CFR-seminar in his country. I was slightly positive to the idea and asked him if everyone would be welcome to participate from wherever they would come. The answer was affirmative. But when I specified with an example, asking if homosexuals would be welcome. He answered that certainly they were but we were not permitted to discuss homosexuality. Then I asked if Israelis would be welcome. The answer was that Arabs but not Jews from Israel would be welcome. The CFR did not organize any seminar in that country.

Not to organize a seminar there was a relatively passive action. Does the CFR do anything actively in order to minimize the effects of borders on the globe?

JT

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2013 Vol 39 (1)

What about all the hidden values we all have? The other day, when I read the manuscript of an article I had promised to review, I saw the word “illegitimacy”. I thought that such a vocabulary was outdated except for when quoting old texts. But there it was in a modern manuscript from an unknown colleague in Western Europe. I was, to exaggerate somewhat, horrified.

But at the same time a quote from the bible came in my mind. My specialty is not the bible, certainly not. But sometimes some of what I learnt as a boy is still there. Verse number 41 of St Lukas Gospel, chapter 5 reads:

And why beholdest thou the mote that is in thy brother's eye, but perceivest not the beam that is in thine own eye?

Thus, I am fully aware of that I have my faults or peculiarities and that I don't perceive all of them; in fact quite few, I would guess. But, still, I have the right and amusement of perceiving others'.

To call children “illegitimate” is an old fashioned way of seeing them – and their mothers. In Sweden, for example, this term was officially abandoned in 1917 and replaced by the term children born out of wedlock, in the 1960s even this term was seen as negatively labeling children and was replaced by the term children born by not-married mothers. Nowadays that term is mainly used only in demographical context.

Another term I have noticed in these respects is “consensual unions” as a euphemism for non-marital cohabitation. Are marriages non consensual? I thought they were consensual, at least in the Western World.

By the way, and in contrast, can anything between two persons be consensual? According to my theoretical perspective there can be nothing mutual or consensual. When two persons decide to do something at the same time we say that they do it together. But, do they really? I would say that the decisions as well as other activities might be done at about the same time, but not mutually and not together. One does one thing, the other one does another thing.

Isn't that just speaking nonsense? Yes, if I would do so in everyday life but now I am speaking (or to be more correct, writing) in a scientific context. If you say to me “Let's go to the opera tonight.” And I answer positively. Does that mean that we have decided mutually. No, you decided to suggest a visit at the opera and I decided to say that I wanted to go there with you. Two separate decisions. And two separate contents of the two separate decisions.

Another example: We can still hear and read that a couple “has formed a family” and terms like “family formation”. These two terms are usually used in demographic context and mean simply that a couple has married and are marriage, respectively. That way of speaking is a reminiscence of old times and especially old ideology. The idea was that when a couple had married a child would soon be born, meaning within about a year.

And foreseen are all those couples who already had a child and all the remarriages where one or both new spouses had a child from a previous marriage dissolved through death. At that time the term was ideological and somewhat realistic. Now the terminology is still used despite the fact that in many countries (for example, the three Scandinavian countries) the number of children born by a not married mother living together with the father is higher than the number of children born where the parents are married to each other.

I would be glad for comments.

JT

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2013 Vol 39 (2)

In 1963 I was invited to the 8th international seminar of the CFR in Oslo, organized by Erik Grønseth on the theme of *The Decision to Marry*. When I say “invited” I mean it: at that time the organizers (in this case: Erik G. and Reuben Hill) invited those they wanted to participate. There were no statutes and no membership list of the CFR. I was hoping to be invited to the next seminar which was held in Tokyo, Japan, in 1965. But I was not.

At the ISA World Congress in Evian, France, 1966, I participated; my first ISA congress. At a business meeting some participants were advocating for more democracy within the CFR and that we should have statutes guiding us in the future. Joan Aldous in Minneapolis was one of the more active and she was asked to chair a small group to propose statutes at the next ISA World Congress. She did and the statutes were taken by those attending the CFR seminar in Moscow in 1972 (organized by Anatol Kharchev).

But the process of democratization started earlier and we had the first elected president and secretary/treasurer for a four year period at the ISA Congress in Varna, Bulgaria, in 1970 with Gerrit Kooy, the Netherlands, as president and John Mogeey, USA, as secretary/treasurer. And the membership fee was USD 40.- per four year period, the same as now more than 40 years later!

Beside the elected officers of the board of the CFR another very important principle was introduced: that all members of the CFR should have the right to be invited to all CFR seminars and to the world congresses – of course numerous clauses would be applied if needed. During the years some modifications of the statutes have been taken, mainly in order to modernize them.

The first time the statutes were properly applied to an election was in 1973 for a new board to take over at the World Congress in Toronto in 1974.

I have participated at all congresses since my first one and I have participated at a majority of the CFR-seminars. Some of them have been very well organized, some not. Some have had good presentations, some not. But all have for me personally been very satisfying. Some presentations have been interesting, so have also some of the discussions been.

Most rewarding, however, have been meeting old friends from the international field and making new friends. Important, according to my opinion is that we should not only speak to people with the same mother tongue as we ourselves have. One of the aims with congresses and seminars is to meet new colleagues from other cultures and very important is new friendship. Acquaintance can develop into friendship. And the experiences that Arthur Koestler shows in his book *Call Girls* (1972) are very important – the book has nothing to do with pornography but with collegial friendship, well worth reading.

JT

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2014 Vol 40 (1)

As a young student many years ago, I learnt that there are a number of family functions. Some of the functions were called primary functions, namely procreation (more or less meaning sexuality), socialization and the emotional function, also called the primary group function. The others were functions of protection, economy, religion, and leisure.

These could be seen in the view of the surrounding society or as the satisfaction of the individual's needs. All seven family functions were seen as necessary for the society and for the individual to survive.

Around 1970 a lot happened, at least in the Western world. For us family sociologists one example was the "sexual revolution" meaning that new contraceptives came, the pill and the IUD, both non-directly related to sexual intercourse. A second example was that non-marital cohabitation came, first in opposition to or against the established society, and very soon just as a parallel to marriage, just what others did and no opposition but a new social institution.

Within these movements the idea of functionalism became obsolete and conserving. Now we can hardly hear anyone speak about family functions. From an anthropological perspective a functionalistic approach might still be reasonable.

Another issue when I was a young student was the developmental approach, which carried the idea of family life stages on its shoulders. The idea with this was that the first stage was the newly married couple, a next step would be the family with an infant or toddler, a third with more children, and so on until the seventh stage might come with the launching family, meaning when the children had left home and finally one of the spouses would die and the family was gone. Important is to stress that this approach deals with *stages* and not with *states*. Stages are dependent of each other but states are not necessarily so.

The family life stages did not see any children born by unmarried mothers, no divorces, no early deaths among spouses, no childless couples, and so on. I made a longitudinal study of newly wed couples and followed them for five years. If I would be very tolerant to the idea of family life stages I found that only about two thirds followed the pattern. When I was more critical and restrictive I found that only about one third followed the pattern¹!

These approaches were idealistic and non-realistic and have hopefully disappeared from our field of family studies, both theoretically and empirically. Both these approaches saw *the* family as a unit and as a simple unit where, for example, all family members (with the outside perspective) also see not only themselves but also all others as members of *the* family. We can see the same phenomenon in many of the writings about “family boundaries” where an outside view decides who would be members of *the* family.

I have often wondered who those are who can take the responsibility to decide who are members of my family – or for that matter anyone else family. Is this my perspective strange to come from a family sociologist? Many might say so. Hopefully many would agree with me.

To me there is no concept connected to the term *family*. Or to say it in a different way, the term *family* is covering a number of other terms like an umbrella, or better a roof since an umbrella traditionally covers only one while a roof also traditionally covers many parts of an area. Examples could be relations, friendship, births,

¹ Jan Trost, The Family Life Cycle - An Impossible Concept?, *International Journal of Sociology of the Family*, 4, 1974.

Jan Trost, The Family Life Cycle: A Problematic Concept, in Cuisenier (ed.): *The Family Life Cycle in European Societies*, Mouton, 1977.

children, marriages, deaths, socialization, divorces, cohabitation, prefix-families, and so on. All these can be said to be the concepts of the term *family*.

The disappearance of ideas of family functions and of family life stages as well as the disappearance of the belief that we can speak about *the* family in definite form is one of the improvements we have seen in our field.

JT

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2014 Vol 40 (2)

Some days ago one of my daughters, one of my grandchildren and I went to the Ericsson Globe in Stockholm. For those who do not know what the Globe is can be said that it is an enormously big construction and is in fact a globe. The Globe is used for sports events, like ice hockey, theater performances and whatever.

We went there to see Carmina Burana. Carmina Burana is based upon poems from the 12th and 13th centuries and deal with various aspects of life – written by students. Nature, desire, wine, love's beauty, and the carnal lust, sadness, and as also how hurt can be wonderful; are all transformed into music, instrumental music as well as vocal songs. Carmina Burana was first played in 1937 with music composed by the German Carl Orff.

Special with the performance saw was that there was not only very beautiful music played by an orchestra, solo singing, an enormous mixed choir, a youngster choir but also seven ladies in their eighties and nineties. These latter were selected from regular elderly women in the area. One after the other told us a part from their own lives, a part of love at young ages, of love at older ages, of grief, of betrayal. Nothing strange. Just what we all experience, some of us many times and others more seldom. However, in regular life we do not openly tell others about such experiences. Here these ladies did.

As family sociologists we all know that we all have such experiences and that we personally are silent in these matters. So, how come that I write about this in my column?

One answer is that I enjoyed the performance so much that I want to share my pleasure with you. Another, and maybe more important, answer is that the stories told by the old ladies are of the kind we find in interviews and observations for study – and here we had them on stage and not as usual back stage. Furthermore, we all use our knowledge of the past, some of us manifestly and others latently. And here we were served them through the songs written several hundreds of years ago. The young persons of that time were not different from what they are now. In some respects our societies have changed but when we are speaking about emotions and relations: they are the same whatever happens.

JT

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"Must a name mean something?"

That is what Alice doubtfully asked.

"Of course it must", Humpty Dumpty said with a short laugh: "my name means the shape I am — and a good handsome shape it is, too. With a name like yours, you might be any shape, almost". (Lewis Carroll: Alice in the Wonderland, 1871.)

When I was newly born my parents decided that my name should be Jan Lennart Eugén Trost. No problems for me until I was about five years old. At that time, when World War II had started, a ship with bananas came to my home town, Gävle. There were not many bananas aboard the ship so it was decided that all children under the age of seven would have banana for free. My oldest brother took his bike, went down to the harbor and got a banana for me.

In the meantime we democratically decided that we should split the banana in six pieces, one for mother, one for father, and one each for us four children. Before my brother came home one of my aunts came to visit us, she came together with one of her daughters and her baby. When my brother came home my aunt grabbed the banana mashed it and gave to the baby. As with babies a lot, maybe most, of what is put into their mouths comes outside.

That way our (and in fact my) banana was destroyed. We had to wait several years after the war before we could taste a banana. Worst of all was for me that that ugly little baby was named Lennart. Since then I can hardly stay that name. Not until my mother had died I applied to the authorities to change my name by dropping the ugly name. Furthermore, for years I could not eat bananas.

Another example of the importance with names: my father came to my hometown when he had finished his education in Germany. He found a good job in Sweden and my mother and he found each other. One of my uncles in Germany heard about the good country. He moved temporarily and found a job for a while in a tiny village. There he met a nice woman, suddenly she was pregnant. He left and went back to Germany.

The woman gave birth to a child. Now the child's family name was of importance for the new mother. The system worked to the effect that a child born to an engaged-to-be-married couple had the right to take the father's surname. For the mother this was important: she was not a loose woman and the child was not "illegal" (only born to an unmarried but engaged mother). With the support of my parents she could prove that she and my uncle had been engaged to be married. Her surname was Andersson, a very common name in Sweden. She gave her son the name Trost after his father (who had disappeared). Her honor was granted.

For the son his surname was not nice. Trost was a very uncommon name in Sweden, in fact only four persons had that name: my parents and my two siblings

(I was not yet born). When the son grew up Hitler and his gang had taken the power in Germany and World War II started soon. People asked the little boy from where his very strange and unusual name came. Not nice to be the son of a German father who furthermore had left him and his mother. For most Swedes to be German meant to be a Nazi.

Immediately after the son had reached majority he had his name changed to Andersson. I fully agree with Humpty Dumpty that names have a meaning.

JT

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2015 Vol 41 (2)

'On presentations at scholarly meetings'

During the years I have attended many international seminars, conferences, symposia and congresses (or whatever they might be called). Some presenters have evidently been very good, some just good teachers/pedagogues, some have not. What could we learn from the good one? I will here try to give some of my answers to that question.

First of all, the good presenter empathizes with the audience. That is not an easy task; the audience oftentimes is heterogeneous as far as goes, for example, scientific experience, interests and knowledge. Sociology is not only sociology, there are many sociologies; the ISA lists 55 specialties when enumerating the research committees of which ISA consists. Luckily, however, meetings are somewhat homogeneous as far as specialties go. The good presenter asks herself (for simplicity I let the good ones be females) what an audience she has and adjusts her presentation to fit.

To present is like writing an abstract, it is a way of marketing. When presenting we should not be interested in just knowing to have another item in the CV. We want people to find the presented interesting and to be interested in knowing more, might be to ask for a copy of the entire manuscript to be or just to sit down to discuss what you have said. Furthermore, like an abstract the presentation should be short, oftentimes the presenter will have only 15 or 20 (sometimes even less) minutes available for the presentation. And it happens that the presider of a session is less careful about the timing, which easily means that the last presenter of a session will have less time for her presentation. Thus, the good presenter is time-flexible and she has planned for both less and more time. She is also interested in having comments or questions from the audience after the presentation.

The good presenter:

1. Speaks loudly, clearly and somewhat slowly, remembering that the language spoken is not the mother tongue of all in the audience,
2. briefly tells the audience about the aim with the study,
3. gives some brief and important information about the theoretical perspective used (if any),
4. tells us what methods used even when the study is a so called theoretical one,
5. gives the audience brief information about important details about the method used; if quantitative she tells us about the sample size, its degree of statistical representativity, how data was collected, about the technical analyses. If qualitative she tells us about the sample and its degree of sociological or theoretical representativity (for example, if a strategic sampling has been made), how data were collected, about the technical analyses,
6. gives the audience information about the main results. This can be made orally only or in combination with visibility: if a film she shows only relevant parts, if power-point she does not show big tables and certainly not big tables showing, for example, with details impossible to comprehend within a few seconds – she shows only relevant data,
7. she gives the audience information about her interpretations of the results; what new theoretical insight comes from her study, or if a social problem is in focus she tells about the practical implications she can see that might be used in order to reduce the social problem.
8. Finally, the presenter I have in mind is not nervous, but if she were: what would she do? She might imagine the older participants to be nervous when young so they should be able to identify with her (on the other side many of those have forgotten what it was to be young and nervous). She might remember that all in the audience have their weaknesses; some men might feel ashamed that they have problems with their prostate; some might feel that they are not properly dressed. Such imaginations help many overcoming their nervousness when presenting.

A propos power point presentations: our presenter is careful in selecting only relevant information on the screen, for example, an outline of the structure of her presentation to be. She shows short texts and not long ones (and she certainly does not read the text – she is aware of that everyone is able to read by him- or herself), she shows simple informative diagrams or tables, not complex in short time incomprehensible ones. She does not look at the screen on the wall but on the audience and when necessary at the manuscript.

If there is time left for questions and comments the good presenter answers shortly, to the point, and she does not go into a long discussion. Oftentimes, she realizes that it is better to be appreciative for the questions or comments than to defend or to argue.

Finally, the good presenter listens and learns from the visible as well as the spoken reactions among the participants of the audience.

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At the end of June I went by car down to southern Germany, a drive of about 2,200 km (1,300 miles), to visit my family there. Meaning my cousins still alive on my father's side, I don't have any one left on my mother's side. There are four of them and they all are married. I had not met them before I retired and still I call them "my family." And I feel that we are family the nine of us (my cousins, their spouses and I).

When at home in Uppsala "my family" is different and it usually consists of my children, their husbands and all my 12 grandchildren. Quite a big family.

These ways of using the term family is very common as are other ways; there are an almost unlimited amount of concepts connected to the term. My two examples of which family members I have are examples of a person's (in this case I am the person) definition of her/his family. A person can also have ideas or opinion about the meaning of the term generally or specifically for other person's families.

As some of you can see I am returning to what I have written about for about 40 years: the question of "What is family?"

Evident is that the concepts connected to the term family are bound to the person's definition of the situation. And that in its turn means that a person's family is not, technically speaking, stable; on the contrary it is flexible and the meaning, the concept, can change frequently. Many legal systems use the term family but seldom (if ever) there is a clarification of the meaning of the term. Mostly, I guess, the term family is just a political jargon to satisfy some people.

Some years ago at in international seminar I asked the participants, about 25 persons almost from all over the world: "Please, write down who are members of your family." Three of them, all from India, said that there was no meaning for them all to do what I asked them to do. The reason was simply, according to them, that everyone in India means the same with the term "family". Therefore, it would be enough if just one of them did what I asked them to do. So, I asked them again to be so kind to do what had asked them. Nice persons as they were, they obeyed my wish.

When all in the group had finished I asked them to report to all of us who were included. As I knew would happen there was variation of what kind of members they included or not. Some meant that only household members could be family members, others that only what usually is called nuclear family members could be included in their family. Some included pets, some deceased persons, some friends, and so on. The three persons from India also showed clear variation

among themselves despite that they had “known” that they meant the same, that they had the same definition of their own families.

One might draw the conclusion that the definition of one's own family would not at all be culture bound. I would not draw such a conclusion but one of my conclusions would be that there is great variation of the meaning of the term “my family”. A friend of order might say that there is no order at all. That's one of the problems with homonyms within scientific work.

JT

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On Relationships

A television advertisement for a healthy juice (or what is claimed to be a healthy juice) shows a woman with a glass in her hand. In the glass, there is a liquid seemingly to be juice. A voice says something to the effect: There is only one relationship lasting for the rest of your life – The one to yourself!

This statement reminds me of our colleague Jessie Bernard and her book from 1972: *The Future of Marriage*. She underlines that a marriage does not consist of one relationship but of two; in traditional marriages, her relationship to him and his relationship to her. In the 1970s her statement was looked upon as very radical – in the meaning of being extreme.

If we would go back another 70 years, we could find that Jane Addams, in her book *Democracy and Social Ethics*, also claimed that there are two relationships between two persons. Her statement was about the relationships more generally than marriage. Addams takes the house cleaner's perspective when she studies house cleaners and their relationship to the employers and the employer's perspective when she studies employers and their relationships to the house cleaners.

At about the same time Georg Simmel in his book from 1908 *Soziologie* also stresses that in a dyad there is not only one relationship, there are two relationships.

During 1985 I was an invited visiting professor at the Kinsey Institute in Bloomington, Indiana. Many of those I met there and otherwise said that they and Alfred C. Kinsey were very good friends. Such statements made me curious and since I had all the Kinsey archives I decided to see if I could find what kind of a social person he was during the latter decades of his life (he died in 1956). The result? I could not find any evidence that Kinsey had any friends other than, maybe, his wife. Thus, I have some doubt in the truthfulness of all who claimed that they and Kinsey were good friends. They might themselves have been good friends with Kinsey.

When listening to lay people as well as to professionals such as therapists, marriage counsellors, physicians as well as politicians and, sorry to say, even family

sociologists, the idea of just one relationship in a dyad is quite common. We can hear statements like: “Their marriage is happy marriage” or “those two are so happy together”.

I presume that we all know cases where one of the two in a marriage is very satisfied, or happy, with her/his marriage while the other one is very dissatisfied, or unhappy. Social reality is what we are concerned about – not ideology – which for example, Jane Addams, Georg Simmel and Jessie Bernard, realized.

Nice would be if you would respond to me – independent of if you like or dislike my views.

JT

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Demography, Politicians and Family Sociologists

The American president Dwight D. Eisenhower once warned the Americans for the dangers of social welfare. He said that the welfare state he had in mind has an extremely high suicide rate as well as an extremely high number of illegitimate children born (at that time common was to speak about children born by not-married women as “illegitimate”).

From what he otherwise said, it was obvious that he was speaking about Sweden even if he did not explicitly say so.

According to official statistics, Sweden had a comparatively high suicide rate, but not at all extremely high. When Sweden officially told him that he was wrong, he publicly admitted his failure.

As for the “illegitimate” children born: It is true that Sweden had a high ratio of children born to not-married women. Ratio means as usual, in this connection, relative to all children born. The ratio in the USA was about four per 100 children born and in Sweden about ten percent.

At that time, I was a BA student and as such, I was curious (I still am curious) so I asked myself what these figures meant. Only women in so-called fertile ages can give birth to children. Thus, wouldn't it be more relevant to compare the number of children born by not-married women in fertile ages to all women in fertile ages rather than to the number of children born. When recalculating I found that the rate of “illegitimate” children born was the same for the USA as it was for Sweden!

How can we understand so to be the case? Very simple, the average number of children born per woman of fertile age was about four (4) in the USA while it was only half in Sweden, about two (2) children per woman as an average. No wonder that the ratio shows a higher figure for Sweden than for the USA. Thus, the ratio gives us one truth and the rate gives us another truth. Are they “alternative truths”? In a sense: yes. If you want to show, how “sinful” women are (in this connection men are not “sinful”, they just do what men are supposed to

do) in social welfare states: use the “alternative truth”, the ratio. However, if you want to be non-political or nonmoralistic: use the other “alternative truth”, the rate.

If you have bothered to read this column this far, you might wonder how come that I bring these historical data into focus now. An old saying in Sweden is to the effect that there are normal lies and statistical lies. One could also say that there are many truths. Eisenhower was right that the ratio of “illegitimate” children was much higher in Sweden than in the USA. In addition, I too, was right when I said that there was no difference between USA and Sweden as for the rate of “illegitimate” children born.

I never told Eisenhower about these two versions of truths. Had I done so he would probably again have admitted the he was not fully correct. Swedish authorities seem never to have noticed this issue of “illegitimacy” so Sweden did not react in this respect.

JT

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A Piece of History

In the Spring of 1962, when I had just finished my PhD, I was asked to give a course in family sociology. One of the books assigned was written by Evelyn Duvall and Rueben Hill. It dealt with “the family life cycle”.

If I remember correctly there were eight passages in the cycle, the first “the newly married couple” and the last the death of the other spouse. Quite fascinating. Together with my students we asked “Where are the divorces?” (we knew about the high divorce rates in the USA) and “Where are the couples who never have a child? Do they remain as newly married for the rest of their lives?”. Just to mention some of the reactions.

The overall question was “In what world do the authors live?” certainly not in a real world. Subsequently I realized that the idea of the family life cycle was spread almost all over the world. The idea seems to have originated among agricultural sociologist who wanted to know how acceptable farmers were to new crops, new machinery, etc. for such practical applied matters were no “deviances” of real importance.

In 1973 Jean Cuisinier organized a CFR seminar on the theme of the family life cycle. There I found a forum where I could ask for input and maybe some answers. My presentation was on The Family Life Cycle - An Impossible Concept?. Later published in International Journal of Sociology of the Family, 4, 1974. Everyone seemed to agree with me in my critique of the cycle idea.

I am an old optimist so I hope that only very few of the members of the CFR Gazette have heard about “The Family Life Cycle” except for as a curiosity. Nowadays I seldom find references to that idea luckily enough. JT