

# **Beyond Nuclear Families**

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## **Abstract**

*What is 'family'? A significant shift has taken place in the way we talk, live and analyse families. The traditional - heterosexual, nuclear and conjugal - model as norm of reference seems to be outdated, as various kinds of families shape the social reality of western societies. I examine the question if social science research and legal reforms go along with these transformations. While mainstream social science research still focuses on conjugal relationships, a critical review of the case law of the European Court of Human Rights reveals the hierarchisation of different relational choices and the reinforcement of heteronormative, traditional models. From a feminist perspective, I introduce some contemporary relational and familial choices and their implications. Finally, I present propositions for the legal recognition of close personal relationships basing on the choice of the involved individuals, instead of focusing on status, sex or cohabitation. The aim of this thesis is to make a case for the human right to relational freedom.*



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