FAMILY IN AN AGE OF ANXIETY: HAVEN IN A HEARTLESS WORLD NO MORE?

AIM: To describe some sociological and related psychoanalytic perspectives on the changing role of the family and the construction of gender and mental health. To emphasise the vital policy related importance of providing good community care for children and the natural environment.

INTERNATIONAL RELATIONSHIPS BETWEEN FAMILY AND ECONOMY

Sex is a biological concept related to the reproduction of the species. The term **gender** refers to the roles or socially expected behaviours, which are learned as a result of being male or female in any particular society. In pre-capitalist societies, **kinship,** or membership of the same biological family, is usually the basic organising principle in all social life, including work.

The process by which people learn the culture of their society is called **socialisation**. The family is usually the first socialising agency. The anthropologist, Margaret Mead, demonstrated that there are a great variety of gender roles across cultures. She did this partly to show that gender roles are not physiologically determined and therefore 'natural'. In some societies, land is passed through the female line, and women have related roles and comparatively high status. In some societies men play a major role in looking after young children. In most societies, however, the women do this work. Women often have secondary social status. They may often be regarded as social goods to be exchanged, in ways which are considered culturally appropriate.

In pre-industrial societies the family is usually the primary unit of production. The kind of work that family members do, and when and how they do it, is determined primarily by the nature of their relationship with the land, and with their kin. Seasons play a major role in determining the pace and type of work required by the whole community and each family. This contrasts with later industrial society, where the workplace and the home are separate spheres, and work expectations are regulated by the generally unrelenting and monotonous requirements of ongoing production and the timekeeper. With the advent of computer technology in the developed world, many people are choosing or feel forced to undertake home based production systems.

In the 20th century, the increasing productivity of capitalism and the related development of the services sector meant that much of the unpaid work traditionally done in the home by women was transferred to the market place. Making clothes, cooking, and caring for the sick, the young and family members with disabilities increasingly became work that women were paid to do for other community members, rather than for the immediate family. The economist Nancy Folbre has written that globalisation is a way of leaving home, and that women now know they can benefit economically by becoming competitive achievers rather than care givers. If all children are urged to adopt this strategy, however, society will become more oriented towards economic achievement rather than care, which is potentially destructive for future generations.   The world is now entering a computer based information revolution. It is difficult to predict what effect these changes will have on traditional expectations of family life, but it seems likely that the current general trend towards individual rather than family based decision making, and also towards having fewer children, will continue. Is it likely that the home will again become the major site of production for most people?

Internationally, the extension of capitalism has often been contradictory in both broadening and undermining the power base of landed families. Members of kinship groups are traditionally united by primary sets of family loyalties and obligations. Providing resources for family sustenance comes first, and personal status and morality may be substantially judged in terms of the effectiveness of this provision, which ideally should radiate outwards from each superior family centre, towards a grateful community of dependant admirers. From the perspective of capitalist and democratic

development, which ideally favours equal treatment and equal opportunity for all, advantaging family members or their supporters may often be regarded as corrupt. In many cultures and subcultures, however, the use of government or organisational resources to entrench family control seems a normal and expected practice.

Some capitalist and communist regimes have tried to implement the difficult ideal that the management of public resources should not also enrich the ruling families. For example, Jung Chang's 'Wild Swans' provides an account of her family over three generations in China. It centrally depicts the effects upon her parents of the tension between an old feudal and familial morality, and the new public morality of the Chinese Communist Party, which was introduced after the Chinese revolution in 1949. Jung Chang's parents came and fell in love from different sides of the class tracks, but both had long and official connections with the ruling Communist party. In times of terrible hardship and starvation, Jung Chang's mother sought to meet the needs of her children first. Her husband, on the other hand, was so strongly dedicated to reform that he bent over backwards never to use his official position for family advantage.

This sad family story also reflects the broader social canvas of conflict between old and new values in a confused environment of rapid economic and political change. In the 1960s, Mao Zedong, the leader of the Chinese Communist Party, sanctioned the period of 'cultural revolution', which involved widespread popular uprisings and attacks upon Chinese communist officials, intellectuals, and anybody else who might be regarded as corrupt or revisionist by students or local community groups. However, the process was often that of a lynch mob settling old scores, rather than a community dispassionately collecting and weighing evidence. Today the Chinese Community Party has entered the international marketplace and China has become a member of the World Trade Organization. Older communist notions about public ownership of land and factories are being reversed and the importance of international competition is promoted in the party dictum that it doesn't matter whether a cat is black or white as long as it catches mice.

CAPITALISM AND EARLY THEORIES OF GENDER ROLES

In Europe, the development of capitalist production also created the conditions for the growth of private consumption and the private life. Notions of a purely domestic and private domain were generated primarily by the rise of wealthy manufacturing employers, who saw their status as related to their ability to keep their wives and children well protected from the worst horrors of struggle in the market. However, the possibility of defining a separate sphere of home life, apart from work, became more elaborated in all walks of life as the economy became more productive.
As early as the 17th century, the British philosopher Hobbes had discussed why it was that that the law did not treat women as free and equal to their husbands. It was centuries before women had legal rights over their children, and they had no property rights once they had married. Unlike men, they did not gain the vote until the 20th century. Hobbes argued that marriage is a contract under which the bourgeois wife voluntarily consents to be led by her husband. Hobbes thought that she put herself under his protection because of her weaker situation in the market economy, which was in turn was related to her reproductive function.

In the nineteenth century, Engels provided a different perspective, which was based on the conflict theory of Marx. This was embraced and reworked by a great many feminist sociologists a century later. In 'Origins of the Family, Private Property and the State', Engels argued that the determining factors in history are the production of the means of subsistence on the one hand, and the reproduction of human beings (children), on the other. He argued that the sexual division of labour became increasingly unequal as the capitalist economy gathered behind it an increasing amount of wealth and power. Because men were primarily involved in industry, whereas women were

primarily involved in childbearing and rearing, the comparative power of the former dramatically increased as capitalism developed, at least for the middle and upper classes.

Engels thought the increasing productivity of modern industry would lead to the outsourcing of traditionally domestic production to the market, and would also reduce the need for strength as an attribute of labour. He thought this process would also draw women into the market at comparatively cheaper rates than men (since they had worked at home without pay) and would eventually bring about the equality of the sexes. In the West this has tended to happen. However, some feminist writers of the 1960s, such as Firestone, have argued that the biological differences between men and women constitute the primary source of gender inequalities. They saw this reproductive difference as one that male dominated capitalist production would invariably use to maintain existing structures rather than to eradicate them.

As capitalism developed in the 20th century, women had fewer children and the nuclear family replaced the extended one. Parsons gave a consensual and functionalist account of gender roles in a modern capitalist society and described the isolated nuclear family in this context. He thought the family undertakes two basic functions, which women and men perform respectively, as a result of their natural inclination, and to their mutual advantage. The role of the women is primarily to provide the warmth, security and emotional support necessary for the effective socialisation of the young. Parsons described this role as 'expressive'. On the other hand, he saw the man's role as 'instrumental' – in undertaking the behaviours necessary to become an effective provider in an increasingly competitive market place. Later U.S. economists, including many who wrote about discrimination in the labour market, also tended to see the family as the site of a rational and generally welcome bargain. This is struck between men and women whose ability to compete in the labour market is inherently unequal as a result of childbearing functions and related emotional make-up. However, these writers also often noted that social structures then tend to reflect this dominant social expectation as a requirement for everyone, thus creating an iron cage for individuals who might want to be different. This is discrimination, the comparative lack of equal opportunity for individual expression. The eradication of discrimination is now a stated goal in many countries.

The widespread availability of the contraceptive pill, which began in the 1960s, has radically changed the lives of many women by allowing them to control their own fertility easily. The number of children born to Western women today had dropped to far below replacement level. Many Australian couples feel, however, that one can no longer afford to stay at home and depend upon the other's wage while caring for young children. Those who say this are likely to have expectations about appropriate work and consumption patterns which are driven by their peers, and which are higher than those of their parents or grandparents. Those involved in public policy should promote individual expression, in a way which also promotes international standards related to health, environment protection, and equality of opportunity. The protection of children is also of greatest importance. If men and women both expect to be treated equally, this needs to occur in a policy context which ensures loving care of the most vulnerable, who are children and future citizens.

FREUD AND THE SOCIAL CONSTRUCTION OF GENDERED BEHAVIOUR

It is difficult to talk about family life without recognizing the impact which the theories of Sigmund Freud have had upon the ability of individuals and societies to reflect upon themselves and the production of their apparent human nature. Freud was born in 1856, lived nearly all his life in Vienna and finally died in exile, in London in 1939. He escaped Vienna just as war with Germany was breaking out, although his recognition throughout the world as a great and potentially threatened Jewish intellectual meant that many had been ready for years to help him go wherever he chose. Freud was a medical doctor, a therapist, and an academic who also became leader of an

internationally organised psychoanalytic discipline which was the forerunner of both psychiatry and psychology. Towards the end of his life Freud was honoured not just by his immediate followers, but also by scientists and intellectuals as diverse as the British Royal Society of Medicine and a group of 191 of Europe's most famous writers and artists who sent him birthday greetings. He became increasingly popular in US universities, in spite of the fact that he was openly contemptuous of what he saw as the American way of life and its popularised distortion of his scientific perceptions.

Freud's theories rest on the supposition that humans have two vital drives – self preservation and procreation. He gave the name of **libido** or sexual energy to the latter drive and argued that it was, of necessity, blocked and channelled by the repressing forces of social organization, in order to ensure survival of the group. Freud saw all pleasurable sensations related to bodily functions as part of a broadly defined sex drive. He saw the infant as a 'polymorphously perverse' and highly sexual being, seeking pleasure from any available source. He believed the essential task of the family is to teach gender roles - the controlled and channelled expression of sexuality, which is required by the culture. He thought that this learning is mainly achieved during the first few years of a child's life.

Freud thought that civilisation occurred as a result of sublimation of the sex drive by entire societies. The major theoretical perspectives he worked upon all his life are found in the early work 'Civilization and its Discontents', which is also easy to read and so particularly interesting. A key aspect of effective socialisation supposedly occurs through the young boy learning to identify with his father positively, rather than seeing him as an aggressive and controlling sexual rival for his mother's attentions. In Freud's account the penis has paramount significance as an actual and symbolic source of power and satisfaction, for both sexes. Castration by his father is seen as the central anxiety of the young male. The socialisation task of girls is to come to terms with their lack of a penis, and eventually gain satisfaction in marriage and motherhood. Finding the penis is symbolically expressed in mothering a male baby, which is seen as the ultimate female fulfilment.

Freud's view was that Western societies have built a fragile social edifice by requiring very strong, collective sublimation and channelling of a most aggressive life force (libido). It is the family which must effectively suppress and channel this force into the particular patterns which are most necessary for social order and social progress in any particular culture. In many ways, Freud describes a man's world from a man's perspective. However, he developed his giant intellectual status and his personal conception of science, on the basis of what I tend to think of as a typically feminine method. His primary 'scientific' method was an attempted introspection into himself and others about the nature and origins of the most intimate family matters. I think that Freud's is the traditionally feminine intellectual method of pursuing love, which is a form of control over others. He only sought truth?

Freud was a European Jewish intellectual and atheist. His final major work attacked the Jewish religion. This occurred as Hitler's fascist regime, which Freud finally fled to go to England, was beginning to exterminate his Jewish countrymen. Freud thought of himself as a scientist and believed in his own search for truth above all, throughout his entire life. He was an incredibly brave and strong intellectual force and family provider, in circumstances where he was forever under attack for everything he was and all he said. Yet he became increasingly recognized across the Western world as a great intellectual leader. Among the first to admire him were many American Jews who came originally from Europe and who also engaged in popular culture production. Freud brushed off Samuel Goldwyn's great admiration and attempt to visit him contemptuously even though he was desperate for money. Freud strongly dismissed popular culture. (That's how stupid he was?)

Freud minutely studied the self in relationship to others. This could be seen as an early social interactionist perspective. If we are to work in the enabling professions, we should, I think, practice investigating ourselves. We should try to uncover and clarify the views and behaviours which we may have learned unconsciously in our early years of training in our family, but also in its immediate community and wider society. If we are not accustomed to critically analysing ourselves, we are more likely to risk treating others primarily as objects, whose attitudes and behaviours, as we have professionally defined and investigated them, are to be measured and directed. Without continuing analysis of ourselves, including in relationship to clients, we may develop narrow, dominating or unrealistic concepts of appropriate professional goals and behaviour. This may easily have a negative impact on those on the receiving end. If we continually try, critically and sympathetically, to explore the reasons for our own behaviour, in order to try to act better, I think we are more likely to improve our treatment of others as well. This practice is centrally related to listening and speaking honestly with them. One may learn from clients and from anywhere else that seems relevant to the situation and its requirements. TV and computers are great teachers for us all.

THE UNCONSCIOUS AND THE SEARCH FOR SELF KNOWLEDGE

Freud's work on the unconscious and on related defence mechanisms has become central to popular conceptions of the construction of self, even when his more specific dictates are rejected or reversed. The word unconscious means lack of awareness of one's own mental functioning. Freud's writings on the subject may help us to understand the self-defensive emotional responses which often underlie behaviour. His theory of the unconscious depends upon the view that there are three levels of personal functioning – the id, the ego and the superego. The id constitutes the instinctual part of the personality. Its contents are innate, hereditary, rapaciously self-interested and largely repressed as a result of the early civilising functions of the family in society. Freud sees the id as almost totally unconscious. It may be either playful and creative or destructive. However, it remains essentially animalistic and often given to unpredictable emergence from the controlling forces considered necessary for the maintenance of the existing social order.

By way of contrast, the super-ego is the moral framework, which is consciously learned as the child matures as a member of the broader society. Whereas the id is uncontrolled and unconscious, the mature superego will always seek to maintain conscious control over the person. The ego serves as a mediator between the superego (conscious rules derived from society) and the id (unconscious rebellion or playful pleasure seeking). The task of the therapist is sometimes seen as helping people to question themselves, in order for them to be able to recognise, address and balance troublesome elements of their id, ego and superego development in their own interests, and in the interests of the community. Strong ego functioning is seen as vital for the development of mature intentionality. A central task of the ego is to balance the external and internal forces impinging on the individual and to defend personal stability. Ego-defences are useful for protecting any person from feelings of anxiety, threat and guilt. (I wonder if effective ego-defences are also related to the operation of our immune systems.) In this mental health context, it is also interesting to remember the words of Thomas Szasz, a famous contemporary psychiatrist, who said that only after he acquires speech does the child become provokable by words and hence temptable. Szasz says we call this 'teachable' if we approve of his yielding, and call it 'corruptible' if we do not.

Perhaps Freud's most lasting and widely accepted contribution to the study of the mind was his description of the defence mechanisms, which we all employ. We can sometimes recognise them as a result of attempting to investigate and clarify our negative emotions and behaviours. This may help us put our feelings and actions into a wider and more honest perspective. It may also help us to

gain a better balanced understanding of how to proceed with whatever we are doing, or how to change direction.

Repression occurs when we force negative feelings and memories into the subconscious, or simply keep an item or concept away from our consciousness. This knowledge may remain a constant subterranean influence on our behaviour and mental states, and may sometimes unexpectedly emerge verbally, in embarrassing 'Freudian slips'.

Projection occurs when we attribute our own unacceptable feelings to others instead. Splitting occurs as we attribute to others what we reject in ourselves. For example, it may be that men who violently attack homosexuals do so because they so strongly fear and reject their own homosexual desires. The demonising of an opposing religious or political group might provide another example of projection. Jung thought the history of economic and political advance during the twentieth century was also an example of an extreme, technologically and scientifically assisted projection of all that is wrong onto the other side.

Denial occurs when someone refuses to recognise a traumatic or troublesome reality. For example, a patient who has been told they will die may not even hear these words, and may behave as if they had never occurred. (As Mark Twain said, 'Denial ain't just a river in Africa'.)

When one does precisely the opposite of one's unconscious wishes, one may be engaging in a form of **reaction-formation**. For example, one may successfully mask unconscious and hostile feelings towards a particular member of the family by **overcompensating** with strong and positive expressions of regard for them.

Through **displacement** we may redirect frightening and unacceptable feelings that we have onto someone else. For example, a person may not feel able to say 'I hate Harry', but may say instead 'everybody at work hates Harry'.

Sublimation is channelling forbidden impulses into socially acceptable behaviour. The person who is sexually frustrated may utilise this energy in constructive artistic, physical or intellectual endeavour.

Other potentially useful concepts for self-analysis include **regression**, which is a return to an earlier, safer and less demanding level of development, usually in childhood, and **identification**, which involves modelling one's behaviour on some significant other. **Provocative** behaviour is acting in such a way that others are provoked to express what one feels unable to express oneself, such as emotions of anger or need.

DISCIPLES AND CRITICS FOLLOWING FREUD

Freud and many other social theorists saw behaviour as shaped by the broad requirements of society, and learned through everyday relations with others, particularly in early family life. Trying to examine our own motives for behaviour gives us many tools to understand, forgive and try to change ourselves. In this process of self examination we can perhaps improve our behaviour towards others and also bring it more closely in line with attainment of our consciously constructed personal goals, including those related to health. It is interesting that Freud's many followers often became his critics. For example, later psychoanalysts, including many women, who Freud welcomed into the movement, studied children and came to different conclusions from their mentor. They focused on the importance of mothering. Later feminists came to see Freud's theories primarily as insights springing from the historical and social circumstances in which he was entrapped. They took Freud's

observations about the penis as symbols of power and its effects, rather than as statements of an immutable biological reality.

The British writers, Bowlby and Suttie, presented an alternative point of view to Freud, which has become very common today. The Tavistock School, of which they were members, became an influential force in family and industrial research in Britain in the period after World War II. Bowlby, who addressed the importance of mothering in 'The Making and Breaking of Affectional Bonds' is perhaps the best known Tavistock School member. As a disciple of Freud, Suttie's increasing departure from the beliefs of his mentor prompted him to write 'The Origins of Love and Hate'. In it, he noted that, as a psychoanalyst, one of the things that caused him to diverge from Freud was his intense feeling that his patients' recovery depended in large part on their ability to elicit tenderness and acceptance. He noted with puzzlement the extreme difficulty he felt in expressing tenderness towards his clients, even when he felt it. He concluded that he had been socialised to see the expression of tenderness as a weak and dependant emotion, felt by children and women, which must be left behind in adulthood, especially by men. Like Bowlby, Suttie argued that in his insistence on sexually predatory emotion, Freud had not understood the importance of the mother and of love in the development of children. Freud had stated that the infant loves nobody but itself – narcissism – and thereby minimised the necessary role of love in ensuring life's continuation. Suttie's objection to Freud's theoretical framework is that the primacy of the sexual emphasis does not allow of a non-sexual but social interest (i.e. love), of one individual for another.

In Suttie's view the infant has an innate need for companionship which is its only way of self preservation. This gives rise to all forms of love, independent of sexual appetite. Young children are seen as easily reacting with fear or anger. Their reactions are aimed at the parent who is called upon to remove the source of the anxiety. Hatred is not then seen as the natural mechanism arising from the self-interested pursuit of sexual satisfaction or from the necessary repression of this. It is instead seen as owing all its meaning to the demand for love, and constitutes a standing reproach to the hated person in denying that love. The purpose of hatred is not death seeking or death dealing, but the preservation of the self from the isolation and perhaps death which is involved in the separation of the individual from the ones who must love it.

Suttie saw sexual love as an integration of genital appetite with the love or tenderness which comes originally from infantile need. In his view sex becomes a means of restoring the lost sense of union with the mother, with sexual intercourse and suckling being alike. He argued that in suckling or in sex, it is absurd to consider who gives and who gets or who gains and who loses. The act is totally reciprocal or else it becomes increasingly associated with anxiety. He regarded anxiety as a hallmark of growing up in the modern culture. In summary, Suttie claimed the basis of Freudian theories is that the fundamental motive of life is the pursuit of sexual self interest. The other person is present only as the subject of the egoistic individual, and socialisation involves keeping egoism in check. The restriction on self-assertion is forced on the individual from outside, and there is no natural goodwill or altruism inherent in the individual self. Suttie argued, on the other hand, that instead of seeking the love of others for the power it gives us to get them to do things for us, we often do things for them, in order to be assured of their love. He argued that Freudian theory ignores the influence of the mother and thereby denies tenderness and universalises sex.

Whilst Freud and Adler asserted that the striving for power and self assertion are aim-inhibited expressions of desires which are essentially aggressive, Horney and Fromm argued, like Bowlby and Suttie, that love of others is a basic need and that the desire for self-aggrandizement, so far from being an expression of self love, is rather an expression of the failure to obtain love. Fromm thought that unloved or selfish persons are not capable of loving others, but they are not capable of loving themselves either. His major aim was to show that historical and social processes create 'human

nature' and that there is constant interaction between the way passions, desires and anxieties change and develop. This occurs as a result of the social process, which is how the individual's energies are shaped by their family culture and its broader environment.

JUNG, THE COLLECTIVE CONSCIOUSNESS AND GLOBAL MADNESS

Jung was a disciple of Freud who became his critic, and whose work also remains highly influential in psychology today. He was the child of a Swiss minister of religion who became a psychiatrist, philosopher and anthropologist with a strong belief in the importance of religion, although not necessarily as it is institutionalised in particular churches. Jung was also an iconoclast. He observed, however, that when people who have been dominated also lose their spiritual connexion to their traditionally nurturing culture and environment, they often lose their way personally and may become increasingly self destructive as a result. He saw the Western economic and scientific approach to the world as extremely powerful. However, he thought of the obsession with analysis and quantifiable measurement of supposed progress as based on the adoption of comparatively crude and limited perspectives, fashioned primarily to serve narrow utilitarian purposes.

Jung thought that the political choices forged through economic and related scientific developments over centuries had led to the division of the world into two increasingly powerful and hostile camps – Capitalism and Communism. Both camps claimed to act as a result of a broader love of humanity, yet the world was poised, after two horrendous world wars, on the brink of entire nuclear destruction. Jung saw these facts as powerful evidence that the world was mad, and filled primarily with hate, rather than being the result of any broader quest for human enlightenment and love, as its major political ideologies and religions have always claimed. He thought this horror was partly caused by the collective and individual rejection of analysing one's own psyche, including its dark side and negative emotions, and that everything negative was increasingly projected onto others.

Jung thought the question of whether God exists or not, is an irrelevant question, because it is asked from the perspective of Western science, as a result of its mania for quantifiable evidence about the environment. He saw the recognition of God as internal to each person, and as the psychological expression of a feeling of connectedness with a being greater and more important than oneself, which it is one's desire and duty to serve as well as possible. Jung thought that we need to regain our connectedness with that subjective, spiritual and natural side of ourselves that we have lost as a result of taking an increasingly industrial and scientific path. To do this he thought we need to start to examine and understand ourselves with as critical and compassionate an approach as possible, in order to better understand how we may go forward more positively. In this process we may question any and every authority, for this remains the path of personal and collective growth. We might choose to do this in a variety of ways, including through prayer, in personal meditation, in therapy, in the community or with teachers.

The US has primarily driven the development of the universal market, and has also been a strong critic of any business, trade union or welfare state development which supposedly inhibits effective allocation by the market. Perhaps as a result of this, the traditional family and church continue to be seen by many in the US as vitally important for maintenance of the social order. Family breakdown, which is also comparatively common in such a market driven culture, appears to be intensely feared and mourned. European and Australian capitalist systems, on the other hand, have tended to see the organization and extension of government support in all areas of community life as the best means of supporting families and individuals in a wide variety of personal endeavours and transitions, some of which may be very difficult. Critics of the latter approach argue that the development of a 'Nanny State' saps community and individual initiative and competition, thereby impoverishing everybody.

THE NARCISSISTIC SOCIETY

The narcissistic society is today a common term, derived from the use of an earlier, Freudian concept. Freud distinguished two types of love: anaclitic, or 'leaning upon', where the subject loves the person who tends to him or protects him; and narcissistic, in which the person loves an object on the model of his love of himself. He may love, narcissistically, either what he himself is, what he himself was, or what he himself would like to be. In this social construct, homosexuality is explained as an attempt to save the perfect love of the sexually overwhelming mother by loving young males the way she once loved him. Later writers discussed the development of a 'narcissistic' society in which the individual is conceptualised as engaged in an anxious, continual and self-destructive quest for self-identity and self gratification. Descriptions of the narcissistic society primarily come from the U.S and Europe, after World War II. In the 1950s, Reisman's 'The Lonely Crowd' was a best-selling precursor to this trend. Reisman claimed that American society had changed from one where moral norms were strongly held and followed, to one where the increasing development of a market economy and services sector had produced a personality whose overwhelming desire was to get by in life through a shallow and fickle conformity to the wishes of others. This 'other directed' personality, which was supposedly produced by the expansion of the need for an increasingly flexible market and worker, was contrasted with the 'inner directed' personality of earlier times, who supposedly had a more developed moral code than merely 'getting on'. (Does the film star Gregory Peck mean anything to you? He often embodied the heroic virtues of the man who stands for right against power and the mob, as did TV cowboy heroes of my youth.)

The French sociologist, Marcuse, concentrated on explaining why the kind of working class revolution that Marx envisaged, never occurred in the developed European economies where Marx thought it would occur. The book 'One Dimensional Man' became a handbook of student protest throughout the world during the 1960s. It argued that people have become increasingly 'private' and self obsessed beings rather than active participants in the broader social structures. Marcuse thought that the development of capitalism and its related technological advance had meant an increasing acceptance of the power relations of production, and the successful direction of popular attention to the consumption of private goods and services as the major means of personal satisfaction. Marcuse, Habermas and many others explained the occurrence of student protests against the Vietnam War and other social problems, as outbursts resulting from the recognition that the working life of the individual is determined, from the cradle to the grave, by the dictates of capitalism. This continued an earlier Marxist argument, which was that personal alienation (loss of meaning), arises as a result of the loss of personal and community control over the undertaking and outcome of work shared with the community. For Marcuse, student revolt was being carried out against an apparent future narrowed by the inevitable social requirements of professional careerism, the ethics of status competition, and the values of possessive individualism.

Feminist writers developed related themes. When she wrote 'The Second Sex' in 1949, Simone de Beauvoir argued that in a world primarily constructed and controlled by men, women must perceive themselves from a distorted perspective and construct themselves for male eyes. 'La Grande Sartreuse', as she was called, was the life long close companion of the French existentialist philosopher Jean Paul Sartre, although she never lived with him. In 'The Feminine Mystique', written in 1963, Betty Friedan caused a sensation by suggesting that it was stressful, expensive, and socially dysfunctional to expect highly educated American women to marry and have children in the suburbs. I always doubted her assessment that greater equality of opportunity would also lead to more satisfying and stable marriage. Dale's flippant reference to Germaine Greer's ' The Female Eunuch', is that the author primarily argued that men had oppressed women for centuries and that if they changed their behaviour they had a good chance of getting more sex. Read the book and see if you agree with this summation. Greer is one of Australia's most influential intellectual products.

In 'The Hearts of Men', Barbara Ehrenreich argued than the rise of feminism in the US and around the world during the 1960s had to be understood not simply as a result of women's demand for equal treatment, but also as a result of their higher levels of education and ability to control fertility. In addition, she saw these feminist demands as a response to growing male resentment against meeting the commitments necessary for the traditional breadwinner. She discussed the success of Hugh Hefner and the Playboy philosophy as an expression of male revolt against provision for a family, and the expression of a preference for the pursuit of individual self indulgence.

The fashionable 1960s horror of conformity, Erenreich argued, came partly from rejection of the male necessity to provide for an essentially dependant group – the wife and kids. It was also the logical by-product of the American ideology of competitive individualism, because inability or unwillingness to outshine the competition is likely to result in admiration for alternative models who refuse to take part in the race. Hence, the advent of the hippie movement during the 1960s typifies both a flight from traditional market competition and the breadwinner's commitment, into a hedonistic encouragement of 'doing your own thing'. Student protest and the hippie movement were increasingly seen both as a revulsion against the dictates of the market and its supporting nuclear family, and as the beginning of a commitment to peace and environmental protection. 'Make love, not war', was its essential slogan.

Lasch argued that after the political turmoil of the 1960s, Americans retreated to purely personal preoccupations, convincing themselves that what matters is psychic self-improvement, getting in touch with their feelings, and learning how to 'relate'.   He also thought that it was becoming increasingly difficult for people to find real satisfaction in love and work because they are surrounded with market manufactured advertisements which present fantasies of total gratification. As a result of this, the family becomes a classic site for contradiction. On the one hand, it is anxiously embraced and measured up against the perfect haven of intimacy, warmth and comfort projected by advertisers and longed for in a highly competitive marketplace. On the other hand, under the onslaught of market values, families increasingly become collections of individuals, each trying to pursue their particular dream of self-determination and personal success, encouraged by their education for a universal market where everyone competes to sell themselves to the consumer.

A SOCIAL INTERACTIONALIST PERSPECTIVES ON FAMILY DISTURBANCE

Symbolic or social interactionists assume humans act on the basis of a variety of **meanings** they may give to objects and events, rather than primarily reacting either to social forces or instinctive drives. Meanings arise through the process of human interaction and are further created, modified, developed and changed by interaction. In the process, human actors do not slavishly follow preset norms or mechanically act out established roles. The meanings that guide action arise in the context of their interaction, via a series of complex interpretive procedures. Social interactionism requires the close examination of particular family interactions in order to try to understand their meaning for the actors. For example, Laing's study of the disturbed family occurred from a social interactionist perspective. He thought that what goes on in any group may not be intended or understood by each of its members. However, the dynamics of the group situation may be clear when one observes the interaction from outside. His view was that the highest ethic of family life is reciprocal concern. Each person is concerned about what the other thinks, feels and does. Within this nexus there may be a constant, unremitting demand for mutual concern and attention, which nevertheless may not be satisfied. For Laing, families are often tied together with bonds of love and hate. For example, a father may resent his child, although this may never be clearly expressed. The child may be deeply affected and seek protection from the mother. According to Laing, a family can act as gangsters,

offering each other mutual protection against each other's emotional demands or violence, the reasons for which may nevertheless not have a clear expression.

In 'The Divided Self' Laing states that to be in the same family is 'to feel the same family inside'. He believed that to develop an autonomous self, some children must be free from the imprisoning but ambiguous love which engulfs them. His view was that the result of some fragile forms of family life is that utter detachment and isolation come to be regarded as the only alternative to a clam or vampire like attachment in which the other person's life blood is necessary for one's own survival and yet also a threat to one's own survival. (The same thought might be found in popular expressions such as 'Men, can't live with them, can't live without them'). For Laing, a common problem is feeling that one has no unified self and only exists as a response to significant others. He believed that personal unity is only possible through developing reflective awareness and an acceptance of 'the dark side' of one's own personality.

TOWARDS BETTER NURTURING OF CHILDREN AND THE ENVIRONMENT

Recent sociologists and economists who look at the macro-level of societies and their changing international context have increasingly discussed how to protect children and their future environment. Folbre's recipe for effective nurturing is for communities to reduce the stress on families by modifying the organization of paid employment in ways that make it easier for everyone to combine paid work or education with care activities. This is consistent with the requirements of anti-discrimination legislation and generally also requires reducing the length of the paid working week. Folbre says that women are accustomed to thinking of their economic trajectory in terms of distinct stages such as schooling, followed by paid employment, family care, more paid employment and retirement. Men think in similar terms but with no time out for family care. Folbre and many others argue that expectations regarding these stages should all be blended a bit more, making it easier to combine activities rather than to specialise in one stage at each time. She says that would make it easier for people to combine paid employment with continuing education and this would assist promotion of the life-long learning necessary in an era of rapid technological change.

The UN has recognized that it generally makes sense to construct the rights and duties of individuals and societies upon a firm foundation of protection for future generations. Employment policy being developed and implemented at the community level should be assisted by government support for the effective implementation of related international conventions, such as the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child. This affirms the rights of children to special protection and opportunities and facilities for healthy, normal development. Australia has signed the Convention. It covers the areas of personal freedom, care, physical and personal integrity, standards of living, health and health services, the environment, education, play and leisure, justice, work, immigration and nationality, violent conflict, abduction and international obligations to promote children's rights. In addition, community and government resources should be directed to protection of the broader environment, as required by the UN Declaration on Environment. Signed in 1992, this committed signatories to sustainable development goals. In 2001, Australia's second State of the Environment report showed that the key inland waters are in a woeful state. Marine environments are over-exploited polluted. There is continuing degradation through land clearance, and biodiversity is being rapidly lost. Fixing all these problems requires coordinated regional planning and related community action, supported by government. The achievement of effective self-determination requires continuing redirection of resources in a way which protects the health of children, their communities and the natural environment through a suitably planned and coordinated process. We also need this locally.

CONCLUSION

Community and family life in capitalist societies has been strongly shaped by the development of the market. Although many appear increasingly protected, free and generally better off as a result of this economic development, many forms of mental distress may also be market driven. Under capitalism the extended family has gradually become reduced in size, and the subordination of women has been replaced by recognition of the right to equality of opportunity and freedom of choice for all. In this context, it is vital for societies to recognise the primary rights of children to protection and community support. Since the market most values the forms of intelligence, capacity and beauty that the dominant culture requires, all adult individuals and children are increasingly and continuously forced to address themselves, either as consumers or producers, as if they are primarily the successful products or the rejects of the market and its related status groupings. At the same time, the consumption of products and services may tend to replace broader and more nurturing forms of personal and cultural meaning. In this context, the answer to much personal, social and environmental distress or degradation appears to lie in better coordinated community management of resources to promote a much broader range of programs aimed at community health, environment protection and sustainable development.   As communities we need to look at ourselves and the environment as honestly, compassionately and broadly as possible, with a view to providing better care. Effective implementation of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child is vital to this process. Implementation of the requirements outlined in State of the Environment reports is equally necessary.

FURTHER READING

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