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ABSTRACT

In sociological literature, there exist three paradigmatic approaches to the study of women and the family, i.e., positivism, interpretive sociology, and radical sociology. Because study of the sociology of women and the family has been carried out primarily in the positivistic paradigm, the emphasis has been on the constraints of existing social arrangements as well as the description and analysis of these arrangements. Over-reliance on positivism has also meant over-reliance on the methodology of positivism, i.e., the use of questionnaires, scales, and other objective tests. A multiparadigmatic approach would allow researchers to ask a greater variety of questions, deal with feminist critiques of sexism, vary methodological approaches, and permit social policy decisions to be made on a greater breadth of data. (Author/HLM)

A Paradigmatic Approach to the Sociology of Women and the Family

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Sociologists may look at the same basic data from various points of view. They will decide that different observations are important. Different questions will be raised. They will be studied by different perspectives to explain their data. In the seventies there have been several attempts to categorize these various approaches (see for example, Mullins, 1973; Ritzer, 1975; Boughey, 1978; Sherman, 1974). Such distinctions are realistic. The social world is complex and diverse. So must be our explorations of it. Furthermore this is a strength, not a weakness of sociology. No one perspective has the ultimate handle on truth and each is subject to critical evaluation

What is said of sociology as a whole is true of the sociology of women or the sociology of the family. The complexity of the social world, as experienced by women, should be reflected in the diversity of attempts at explanation. It is unrealistic to lay claim to a single, correct or appropriate point of view. The strength of a diversity of approaches is assumed in the following discussion which examines and evaluates the sociology of women and of the family from several points of view. There is general agreement that there are three distinct approaches or paradigms in sociology. As Sherman (1974) and Boughey (1978) explain, these involve three fundamental choices in "doing sociology". Is the emphasis to be on (1) discovering social laws; (2) understanding and interpreting the social world, or (3) changing it? These three choices are not mutually exclusive. Nor is one superior to another. Each is more or less appropriate for different types of problems. Perhaps it is when the choices are confused that the analyst runs into trouble. The point in outlining these three paradigms is not to establish the best way to study sociological issues. It is to delineate and evaluate what has been done in the sociology of women and the family when one begins by asking whether the end is to explain, interpret, or change the social world.

Paradigms may be categorized according to (1) their assumptions about social reality (2) their theoretical orientations (3) methodologies and (4) exemplars (Ritzer, 1975). The distinctions outlined below are adaptations of Sherman (1974), Boughey (1978) and overlap with those made by others including Habermas (1971).

Explaining the Social World - Positivism:

Positivism or functionalism has a well-established position in all substantive areas of sociology. Its appeal lies partly in its normative base. In other words its explanations fit well with what we have come to accept as common sense explanations of how the world runs. In 1959 Kingsley Davis argued in his presidential address to the American Sociological Association that all sociology was in fact functionalist. Since that time other theorists have echoed the same claim (Fallding, 1972; Habermas, 1971). The centrality of functionalism

is also evident in the emphasis on this perspective in undergraduate textbooks in sociology.

There is no argument that Durkheim (1858-1917) is the exemplar of positivism. His definition of social facts neatly describes the subject matter of positivism.

> "A social fact is every way of acting, fixed or not, capable of exercising on the individual an external constraint; or again every way of acting which is general throughout a given society, while at the same time existing in its own right independent of its individual manifestations." (Durkheim 1964:13)

The definition tells us that social facts constrain individuals. It also tells us that they are greater than the sum of the individuals who comprise them. Positivists assume that social reality is "out there"; that it can be objectively defined and studied. Traditionally, they emphasise the study of the social order and how participants become socialized into the existing order. How is it sustained? How are participants sustained by it? The concepts, or social facts which are the focus of study are roles, values, institutions and structures.

Positivism then is the tudy of social facts. Generally, there is a commitment to uncover the laws which govern these. The method used is adopted from physical science. A guiding principle is Comte's dictum, "To know, in order to predict, to predict in order to control." More specifically, positivists rely on aggregate data such as obtained from questionnaires or interviews in their objective study of the social world. This is despite the inconsistency pointed out by Ritzer (1975). Positivists need data describing "wholes" not "parts" since the "wholes" are assumed to be greater than the sum of the "parts".

Because the emphasis has been on order, and order is sustained by consensus, positivistic theories have been accused of a conservative bias. This is particularly true of the reaction to the theories of Talcott Parsons, the most prolific of the modern-day functionalists. Gans (1972) has shown that functionalism need not be conservative. In the article, "The Positive Functions of Poverty", he pointed out fourteen ways in which the poor serve the rest of society. He showed that poverty could be eliminated if functional alternatives were provided for these. In doing this, Gans has provided a critique of the existing order, using the basic principles of functionalism.

The term positivis as used here refers to a wide variety of perspectives, among which there may be little agreement over specifics. Generally speaking however, there are certain underlying consistencies. They all consider the social world as an objective social reality: one that can be studied scientifically using methods borrowed from natural science. Like natural scientists, their goal is to explain. The terms

functionalism and mainstream sociology have been used interchangably with positivism for good reason. Functionalism has long dominated North American sociology. Other positivistic theories such as Exchange Theory have had relatively little impact when compared with various functionalist approaches. It is the underlying concentration on explaining the objective social world using scientific methods which distinguished positivism from radical or interpretive sociology.

Understanding the Social World - Interpretive Sociology:

Max Weber (1864-1920) did not share Durkheim's view that social reality was objective. For Weber, social reality is subjectively defined. Interpretive sociology begins its analysis of the social world from the viewpoint of the participants. It studies ways in which subjective definitions of social reality are created, experienced and described by participants in the system. And, to make things more interesting, social reality includes the prevalent social theories and assumptions about human nature. Raising this issue leads one into the sociology of knowledge.

Theoretical orientations which start from these basic assumptions range from symbolic interaction to ethnomethodology; from Labelling Theories to Dramaturgical Analysis. Some of the important constructs are Mead's "I" and "Me"; Cooley's "Looking Glass Self", and W.I. Thomas' "Definition of the Situation". All share an interest in the processes of self and reality definition. They begin with the actor as a social being, in contrast to the positivist's emphasis on social structure. Not that interpretive sociologists deny structure. They do not. But they see it as part of a constructed reality, not as something that exists apart from the individual. The methodological dictate of interpretive sociology is Weber's idea of Verstehen. Verstehen is loosely translated as 'interpretive understanding'. Generally, interpretive understanding comes from the use of observational techniques. That the process of drawing conclusions from what is observed requires some deduction on the part of the observer is a problem (Ritzer, 1975). A researcher's conclusions about what is observed are themselves based on his or her own "definition of the situation".

Changing the Social World - Radical Sociology:

The exemplar for radical sociologists is Karl Marx (1818-1883). Marxist analyses in North American sociology are relatively recent. This is partly explained by the pervasiveness of functionalism. On the other hand, the rediscovery of Marxism in North America seems to be coupled with the general social disillusionment of the 1960's. The post-war years were characterized by a consensus and affluence which coincided neatly with the normative theories of functionalism. Yet

by the 1960's critical thinkers began to point out several serious failings of the affluent society. They drew attention to blatant and pervarive cases of social inequality - economic and racial first, sexual later. A classic example of this type of social criticism was Michael Harrington's book, The Other America (1963). As he forced us to realize, one quarter of American society was living in hopeless poverty, virtually ignored by the rest. In the same year, Betty Friedan published The Feminine Mystique and drew attention to another contradiction of post-war consensus. To some, these social realities were more appropriately analyzed by Marxist rather than functionalist models.

What is distinct about the radical perspective is the explicit linking of theoretical analysis and active practice (praxes). In contrast to the positivist emphasis on objectivity, radical sociologists cannot separate themselves from the purpose of their research. Another important principle of radical sociology is historical analysis.

Perhaps a word of caution is in order before looking at what it means to study the sociology of women and the family from these three points of view. Simply stated, paradigms are no more than useful ways of organizing sociological questions and answers. They are constructs and we should avoid their reification. Another important point is this: none of the three exemplars confined themselved to one, and only one paradigm. Weber for example, despite his contribution to interpretive sociology did most of his own work in the positivist tradition. This is true of other key figures in modern sociology including the work of sociologists discussed in this paper. Yet this does not detract from the utility of paradigmatic distinctions as conceptual tools.

With this general outline of the three paradigms we may turn to a critical appraisal of the sociology of women and the family. We begin with a discussion of functionalist approaches to the topic. As with many substantive areas of sociology, it is not difficult to substantiate the claim that functionalism has dominated. Interpretive and radical sociology are posed as alternatives to the mainstream thinking. Most often, advocates of each (or both) alternatives begins with a critique (sometimes implicit) of functionalism. In one sense both alternatives are radical. Both demand a reformulation of the way we approach the pursuit of knowledge of human society. We will begin then by examining the strengths and weaknesses of functionalism. Next we will look at the shape of the alternatives.

Positivism and the Sociology of Women and the Family

The point of this paper is to describe how each of the three paradigms helps us to understand women and the family. To do this, we will first describe the paradigms, their major theories, methods and exemplars and then discuss the advantages and disadvantages of each paradigm.

The basic assumption made by positivistic sociology is that the world of social relations has an order which can be studied objectively. In answer to the Hobbesian question the positivist seeks to find universal causal social laws that explain this order. They ask questions such as, How is social order possible? and, How is social order maintained? These are the fundamental questions. They may be directed at any of three levels of analysis - the macro level, the micro level and what Merton has called theories of the middle range (1949). Interactions at all three levels are assumed to maintain equilibrium in a system at that particular level. So Fred L. Strodbeck (1963) on the micro level studied decision making between couples and then categorized the couple's system as equalitarian, male dominated or female dominated. On a macro level Zelditch attempted to explain the stability of whole societies in terms of the universal division of labour into instrumental and expressive roles (1963). And Bell and Vogel (1960) have presented a middle range theory in which they describe the interrelationships of social institutions such as the family, the economy, the polity and the community. The point is that regardless of whether they speak of roles, institutions or societies, the assumption of a continuing system exists.

Functionalism is the predominate theoretical perspective within positivistic sociology in general and in sociology of the family as well. (Morgan, 1975).

From this perspective the family is seen as an objective and observable system or institution made up of parts which are interdependent and related to one another. The institution of the family is also viewed as being in an interdependent relationship with other institutions like the economy, the polity and the community (Bell and Vogel, 1960). Relationships amongst parts of the internal family system are analysed with the use of such concepts as roles, norms, expectations and exchanges. The individual family is seen as a system, in stasis, maintaining order. Each member of the system is seen as providing functions which serve to enhance the continuation of the order or dysfunctions which lead to the demise of the family system. In this way each part makes some contribution, whether positive or negative to the maintenance or the stability of the family system. At the same time, the family itself is considered to be in interactive relationship with other institutions in the society. Thus it is seen as contributing in eufunctional or dysfunctional ways to the maintenance of the larger social system or society of which it is a part.

In the sociology of the family there are two seminal works in this paradigm; the one viewing the relationships of the family with other institutions and the other looking at the internal dynamics of the family. These works are on the universality of the family (e.g. Murdock,1949; Reiss,1971) and the work or the division of labour and differentiation and specialization in the nuclear family (Parsons and

Bales, 1955). In the first of these the focus is on the family as a system and its interdependence with other institutions external to it and in the second the focus is on the family as a system with focus on the internal dynamics of the system.

The first question has intrigued family sociologists of this paradigm for a long time. Is the family universal? Is the family necessary? Does the family everywhere contribute to the maintenance of order in the society? Few observers, using common sense would disagree with this. A basic folk wisdom is that the health of the family acts as a litmus paper and is indicative of the health of the society. If the family is healthy, so is the society. Many sociologists of the family too, have operated on the assumption that the family, and indeed the family as we idealize rather than know it (Birdwistill, 1966, 1970; Cuber and Haroff, 1965; Heinskanen, 1971; Veevers, 1973) is crucial in personality formation, child and adult socialization, and even the happiness of all in the society. From this prevailing assumption of the necessity of the family, some functionalists have looked at the universal necessity of the family.

George Murdock is one who has asserted that the family is universal. He defined it as "the social group characterized by common residence, economic cooperation and reproduction. It includes adults of both sexes, at least two of whom maintain a socially approved sexual relationship, and one or more children, own or adopted, of the sexually cohabiting adults (1949:1). Furthermore, he argued that the family is universally necessary because it universally fulfills the four functions of socialization of children, reproduction, sexual relations and economic cooperation. As evidence for his position Murdock consulted ethnographies of 255 different cultures. Ira Reiss critiques Murdock's position through the discussion of three societies which he feels are exceptions to Murdock's contention. He suggests that amongst the Nayar, the Jamaicans, and the Kibbutzim members, the four functions do not adhere to the nuclear family. However, he then redefines the family as a small kin-based group and continues along the same vein to argue for the universality of the family given his new definition.

The other functionalist theory of major importance concerns the structure and function of the nuclear family in terms of the component parts. Talcott Parsons is the chief exemplar of this discussion. Morgan\ (1977:25) has attempted to analyse a wide range of topics: spousal relations, socialization, industrialization and the family, and the incest taboo within the one functionalist perspective. Here we will look at the work or the division of labour in the nuclear family. Building on the experimental work with Robert F. Bales with experimental groups and the cross cultural analysis of sex roles in the family by Zelditch, Parsons argues for the necessity of specialization and role differentiation within the family such that the adult male plays the instrumental role and the adult female the expressive role. The instrumental role is said to be that which is task or goal

oriented and the expressive role is that which is directed to tension management and emotional satisfaction.

Exchange theory also rose to some prominence in the sociology of the family in the 1960's (Broderick, 1971). Mate selection theorists beginning forty years ago with Waller (1938) and Waller and Hill (1951) have adopted this perspective in their theory that mates are selected on the basis of complementary need. The submissive person is said to choose the assertive person, and the reverse in order that the needs of each be fulfilled and balanced. In this way mates are seen as complementary parts of a system. Another interesting application of exchange theory developed by Richer (1968) suggests a chain of interlocking relationships of exchange amongst family members so that particular changes in the life of a child, for instance, change his position with respect to the family. The birth of a baby or starting school are seen as decreasing the access of the child to rewards within the family and increasing his access to outside rewards. This in turn is seen as responsible for the movement towards "the relative devaluation of parents as competitive sources of reward for the child which tended toward a lessening of compliance in the child and finally towards increases in coercive and material centered bargaining on the part of the parents" (1971:144).

Recent emphasis on research on marital adjustment over the life cycle in the marriage and family literature support the view that positivism is in the mainstream of the sociology of the family. Researchers in this area are attempting cumulative, quantitative research with the goal of describing causal laws. It is largely neither of functionalist nor exchange nor any other positivistic theoretical orientation. (Klein 1969:677-687).

The purpose of this paper is to discuss how each of the three paradigms helps us in our understanding of women and the family. The positivists begin by assuming that order is possible and observable. Murdock defined the family and its function and then set about a systematic count of the prevalence of these functions being fulfilled by the nuclear family as he defined it in the available ethnographically described world cultures. His assumption was that if the family universally fulfilled the functions outlined then it was universally necessary for order in the society. What this assumption ignores is the possibility that these 'functions' actually lead to conflict and coercion. And are even enacted out of coercion as many feminists might argue.

Beginning with a definition of the family and its function ensures that all evidence will be considered comparable. On the other hand, it also ensures that the use of other models and definitions of the family are ignored. Polygamous, polygynous, polyandrous, single parent, and homosexual families may be seen by the respective participants as families, and yet not considered such in the literature.

And yet, it might prove equally interesting to describe the purposes served by and the prevalence of any one of these alternative families.

In the second study discussed Parsons argued that the male plays the instrumental role and the female the expressive role in the division of labour in the family. He also argued that this makes sense because of the original biological relationship of women and children through pregnancy and lactation. Because of this tie, he seems to suggest that it is therefore logical that women are the caretakers of children and the providers of emotional support. That the father plays the instrumental role is also said to be logical for Parsons. For if the child is to be pried loose from the mother-child dyad it is, he claims, necessary that the father stands between the family system and the wider extra-familial system (Morgan, 1975:36).

There are several problems with this argument from the point of view of women and the family. The first is that at different times and in different situations men and women "reverse roles" (i.e. house-husbands and women working outside of the home). In single parent families it may be possible that one person plays both roles. And, as Anne Oakley has shown, staying home with the children does not mean that the woman acts expressively all day long. "The qualities of the feminine expressive role, as defined by Zelditch, Parsons and others are directly opposed to the qualities of the housewife/housework role." (1974:28) We might point out also that the ethnographic reports were done almost entirely by men. The extent to which men can see women's lives in an unbiased way, the extent to which they have access to women's private feelings, and in other ways, the essential reliability and validity of this data is questionable.

The exchange theories of Waller and Richer might be criticized as being static in orientation. Mate selection is not viewed so much as the result of a process but as the result of an original decision. And in Richer's framework numerous subsequent changes are said to result from any one change in the family, for instance, the birth of a new baby. Additionally, the whole model of exchange in exchange theory is a market model (and the market is evidently male-dominated).

Current research on marital adjustment tells us something about both men and women's adjustment over the life cycle of the marriage. The problem from the point of view of women in the family is that the development of criteria of a good marriage, the understanding of a good marriage, similar concerns are deemed relevant for both men and women. It has been said before but it should be considered here that women's worlds and men's worlds are different. "It is more likely that members of different social categories as men and women, located differentially in the social structure, both subjectively and literally inhabit different social worlds and realities." (Millman and Kanter, 1975:viii).

This section of the paper has described and critiqued the positivist paradigm from the point of view of the sociology of women in the family. The next part will look at the same issues in the naturalist perspective.

Interpretive Understanding and the Sociology of Women and the Family

The exemplar for the naturalist or social definitionist paradigm is Max Weber, and specifically Weber's notion of the purpose of sociological inquiry. "Sociology ... is a science which attempts the interpretive understanding of social action in order thereby to arrive at a causal explanation of its course and effects" and social action as "Action is social insofar as by virtue of the subjective meaning attached to it by the acting individual (or individuals) it takes account of the behavior of others and is thereby oriented in its course" (1947:88). While all of Weber's work does not fit clearly this paradigm, his view of the nature of the sociological enterprise, as described above, does.

The image of the subject matter in this perspective is in many ways a contrast to that of the functionalist paradigm. Essential to this perspective is the idea that sociological study depends on understanding the meaning of social life to the respondents from their own perspective. Blumer has articulated several of the fundamental features of this paradigm while speaking for a specific theory called symbolic interaction. The three premises which Blumer has outlined are: "Human beings act towards things on the basis of the meanings that things have for them; meanings are derived from, or arise out of social interactions that one has with one's fellows," these meanings are "handled in, and modified through an interpretive process used by the person in dealing with the things he encounters." (Blumer, 1969:2) The major themes of this paradigm emphasize aspects of social reality that are quite contrasting to the aspects emphasized by the social factist/functionalist paradigm. Thus theorists and researchers operating within this framework tend to view individuals as creators of their worlds, and also tend to view their worlds as changing with the changing definitions of the participants of the world. Ethnomethodologists who also work within this paradigm hold an even more radical view of the nature of social reality because they argue that the focus of concern for the sociologists ought to be the methods used by people to make sense of their everyday worlds. A number of major theories may be seen as part of this paradigm including action, symbolic interaction, phenomenological and ethnomethodology.

In the field of sociology of the family the chief exemplars of this tradition are the work of John Cuber and Peggy Haroff, and Elliott Liebow. Cuber and Haroff's study of 437 people from the highest end of an occupational prestige and income continuum is a classic of this type of research. Rather than sample those who were in marital counselling as many other studies of marital adjustment had,

these researchers included people who claimed to be happily married in their sample. They spoke to each of the participants for as long as the subject wanted to talk about the general subject of men and women. They did not have an interview schedule, nor preprepared questions, and simply began the data collection with open ended catalytic questions like "what's it like to be a woman or a man today." Rather than simply asking, are you married or not? are you happily married or not? they asked the subjects of the study to define what marriage meant to them. The study resulted in the development of a five fold typology of marriage as defined by the participants but categorized by the researchers. All of the types, the conflict-habituated, the devitalized, the passive congenial, the vital, and the total saw themselves as happily married. The adjustments and the meanings of marriage were, however, quite different.

In the conflict-habituated marriage the couple was said to argue continually, sometimes with more and sometimes with less hostility and vehemence. This arguing was, however, considered essential to the relationship. As one man, a physician, reported: "It's more like a running guerrilla fight with intermediate periods, sometimes quite long, of pretty good fun and some damn good sex." (Cuber and Haroff, 1965:45). Those in the devitalized category tend to feel that their days of romance and excitement as a couple are over but that that is how it ought to be. As one woman said, "Judging by the way it was when we were first married - say the first five years or so - things are pretty matter-of-fact now - even dull. Now I don't say this to complain, not in the least. There's a cycle to life. There are things you do in high school and different things you do in college. Then you're a young adult. And then you're middle-aged. That's where we are now." (Cuber and Haroff, 1965:49-50) The adjustment of the passive congenial partners is very similar to that of the devitalized except that things have always been 'that way' with them. The wife of a well known lawyer put it this way. "We have both always tried to be calm and sensible about major life decisions, to think things out thoroughly and in perspective.... This prudence has stood us in good stead too. Life has moved ahead for us with remarkable orderliness and we are deeply grateful for the foresight we had." (Cuber and Haroff, 1965:51) The final two categories, the vital and total, are more similar to the idealized view of marriage that is most prevalent. "They do the same things, publicly at least, and when talking for public consumption, say the same things - they are proud of their homes, love their children, gripe about their jobs, while being quite proud of their career accomplishments. But when the close intimate, confidential, empathic look is taken, the essence of the vital relationships becomes clear: the mates are intensely bound together psychologically in important life matters.... It provides the life essence for both man and woman." (Cuber and Haroff, 1965:55) The total relationship is much like the vital relationship except that they do most everything together. One couple's comments suggest some of this. The man says, "I know it's conventional to say that a man's wife is responsible for his success and I also know that it's often not true. But in my case

I gladly acknowledge that it's not only true, but she's indispensable to me." And the woman says, "It seems to me that Bert exaggerates my help. It's not so much that I only want to help him; it's more that I want to do those things anyway." (Cuber and Haroff, 1965:59)

Elliot Liebow's work "Tally's Corner" may be seen as another classic study in this paradigm. Liebow's work is the result of participant observation of the family life of black men on the street. As a result of the participant observation and the theoretical assumptions of Liebow we are presented with a picture of life as it is for the black families themselves. The richness, the intimate detail, and the language of the people make this a good example of a work that seeks to define situations as the participants themselves define situations. In Liebow's study we become very familiar with a few people, the people like Tally, to whom Liebow became closest over the time of his participating and observing. One example of this is the comment of a woman about the feelings and responses of her children when their father, who normally has very little to do with his children, gives them some money. "He gave Buddy and the others a dime. You'd think Jesus had laid something on them. They went all around the neighbourhood bragging their daddy gave them a dime. I give them nickels and dimes all day long and they don't think anything about it. But John, he can give them a dime and they act like he gave them the whole world." (Liebow, 1966:78)

The methods used by those who work within this framework are methods that allow the respondents to speak for themselves: Diaries, autobiographies, long and unstructured interviews and observation of people in their everyday life situations. The goal of this research may ultimately be to arrive at causal laws that are generalizable but the approach to this goal is not through the route of quantification and statistical decision-making, but rather through repeated and anecdotal descriptions of the world as it is for various people in various settings. Accumulation of research findings appears to be difficult but it is not impossible (Ritzer, 1975:131)

<u>There is very little work in the area of the sociology of the family that is done from this interpretive perspective</u>. One important drawback to developments in this perspective is that the naturalists do not begin with the assumption of existing institutions. So while there is scattered work dealing with marriages, families and sexuality, it is generally not formally done in the field of family sociology. One of the chief advantages of this perspective from the point of view of woman and the family is that it allows the women to speak for themselves and thus to describe their own world as they see it. (Bernard, 1973; Cuber and Haroff, 1965; Liebow, 1966) It also allows women to discuss parts of their lives that are of fundamental importance and yet may not be public, visible or official (Millman and Kanter, 1975: x; Cuber and Haroff, 1975; Liebow, 1966). Feelings and emotions may be stressed to a greater extent than they are in other paradigms, and this may be more useful for women's issues in the family. (Hochschild, 1975:280-308; Cuber and Haroff, 1965; Liebow, 1966).

One significant problem with this paradigm, aside from the fact that it is under-represented, is the problem of reflexivity. Whenever an outside observer attempts to listen to and to detail the experiences of another, that outsider is inevitably biased in listening, in hearing, and responding, and also the outsider influences in many, sometimes subtle, ways the data that will be given. Cuber and Haroff do not discuss this problem but they have tried to minimize it through their lack of interview schedule and their interviewing technique. But they do not discuss their relationship to each other or to the participants in the study. They do not talk about the influence of their gender identity or the data that they collected (1965). Liebow does talk about his reactions to people and their reactions to him, but this is not integral to his work, but rather a methodological appendix. We are not sure then about how he felt, responded and felt he was responded to as he collected his data.

This paradigm, fraught as it is with the problem of reflexivity, and of under-representation, ought to be able to provide a good deal more data about women in the family from their own viewpoints.

A Radical Sociology of Women and the Family

The most important distinguishing characteristic of radical sociology is the emphasis on praxis. What this means is that radical sociologists are primarily concerned with social action; with changing what is considered to be oppressive, and this requires a thorough understanding of the roots of the oppression. Hence the radical sociologists' concern with history. "To know history is to begin to see how to take up the struggle again." (Duffy, 1977:2) Nor is it limited to a simple documentation of the past. For feminists its aim is to uncover the nature and sources of sexual oppression. Such awareness will point the way to change.

Radical and reformist feminists (see Duffy, 1977b) do not share the same assumptions. Although it is safe to say that all feminists object strongly to sexual inequality; not all would attack these in a revolutionary way. Reformists concentrate on change within the existing system. Their concern is with increasing opportunities for women through legislative change. They focus on such issues as legalizing abortion, payment for housework, or improving day-care facilities. Radical sociologists believe that equality of opportunity is not possible within the existing structure. The solution for them is major structural change.

As we have said functionalists explain sexual inequalities as arising out of biological differences; interpretive sociologists are interested in the meanings attached to gender identity and radical sociologists attack the subordination of women. They ask questions like: What are the structural conditions which brought about sexual oppression? What factors limit opportunities? And most importantly,

What changes in the system are required? The answers to these questions are extremely complex. They require an analysis of the ways in which the biological fact of sex and the social institutions of oppression interrelate. According to Dorothy Smith, "becoming a Marxist has been an enterprise in trying to discover and trying to understand the objective, social, economic and political relations which shape and determine women's oppression in this kind of society." (Smith, 1977: 12) Clearly, this is not a simple task.

Searching for these answers has lead feminist sociologists in several different directions. Jaggar and Struhl (1978) have outlined three of these, using the distinction as the organizing principle of their book Feminist Frameworks. All rely on the methodology of Marx and Engels, but give different emphasis to class analysis in a Marxist sense. The labels used by Jaggar and Struhl are 1) Traditional Marxism, 2) Radical Feminism and 3) Socialist Feminism. Simply the difference between the three is as follows. Traditional Marxists understand that sexual inequality is tied to capitalism and will not be an issue under socialism. Radical Feminists maintain that sexual inequality is a more fundamental issue than economic inequality and must thus be attacked first. Socialist Feminism sees that the two go together and that they must be confronted together. The following brief overview will clarify these differences. Together they form the backbone of a radical sociology of women and the family.

i) Traditional Marxism

Traditional Marxists assume that the oppression of women will end with economic oppression. Since women's oppression is thought to be endemic to a class society it will be eliminated by a class revolution. Capitalism and sexism go hand in hand; yet Capitalism is considered the greater ill.

Marx and Engels provide the theoretical basis for this position. Each of the three radical positions relies on Marxism to some extent but this is the most literal interpretation. Relatively speaking, Marx and Engels had little to say about women and the family. Brief comments are interspersed throughout their published work. The main reference is Engel's book On the Origin of the Family, Private Property and the State. Several passages from this are quoted in the following discussion. These will provide an idea of the main arguments.

One of Engel's important insights is the relationship between changing family patterns and changing economic structures:

> We thus have three principle forms of marriage which correspond broadly to three principle stages of human development. For the period of savagery, group marriage; for barbarism, pairing marriage; for civilization, monogamy, supplemented by adultery and prostitution. (Quoted in The Woman Question, 1951:67)

But it is not the specific details of family evolution (which have received strong criticism) but his detailed description of modern mono-

gamous marriage which is of primary interest:

> Monogamous marriage comes on the scene as the subjugation of the one sex by the other; it announces a struggle between the sexes unknown throughout the whole previous prehistoric period. In an old unpublished manuscript, written by Marx and myself in 1846, I find the words: "The first division of labor is that between man and woman for the propagation of children." And today I can add: The first class opposition that appears in history coincides with the development of the antagonism between man and woman in monogamous marriage, and the first class oppression coincides with that of the female sex by the male. Monogamous marriage was a great historical step forward; nevertheless, together with slavery and private wealth, it opens the period that has lasted until today in which every step forward is also relatively a step backward, in which prosperity and development for some is won through the misery and frustration of others. It is the cellular form of civilized society, in which the nature of the oppositions and contradictions fully active in that society can be already studied. (op.cit.20-21)

Originally male superiority was linked to his physical strength. But its continued acceptance is linked to Capitalism; particularly to the introduction of private property. To pass economic advantage male lineage was given precedence over 'mother-right'.

> The reckoning of descent in the female line and the matriarchal law of inheritance were thereby overthrown and the male line of descent and the paternal law of inheritance were substituted for them.... The overthrow of mother-right was the world historical defeat of the female sex. (ibid:16)

Marx and Engels have been accused of demanding the abolition of the family. Marx considered this criticism seriously enough to explain his position in writing The Communist Manifesto. It was not the abolition of the family that was needed, but the abolition of the bourgeois family. Bourgeois marriage had a special meaning for Marx (Jaggar and Struhl, 1978:222) It was a marriage wherein the husband controlled the family's wealth. This is why Marx could speak of "the practical absence of the family among the proletariats". The family was principally an economic rather than an emotional unit, and it was this economic aspect which needed changing. In fact neither Marx nor Engels provide details of the nature of intimate relationships following the revolution. The expectation is implicit that families will continue to exist as social units.

According to Marx and Engels, Capitalism will create the preconditions of women's liberation. These are two; the automation of domestic labour and the entrance of women into the paid labour

force. Simone de Beauvoir is one of the modern feminists who would accept the position that technological advances pave the way toward liberation - particularly in freeing women from housework. Yet these predictions are not borne out by the facts. Technological advances have taken much of the drudgery out of housework. Women have entered the labour force in increasing numbers. Certainly women have more freedom. But they do not have equality.

ii) Radical Feminism

Radical Feminists rely more on the method of Marx and Engels than on the specific details of their analysis. They do not agree that sexism is an artifact of Capitalism alone. Sexism exists in all economic systems. Women's oppression is more fundamental than economic oppression. That sexual equality has not come about in socialist countries supports this assumption. Sexual oppression is the most basic, and the most difficult to eradicate. The difficulty is obvious when one considers that the defined task is to eliminate the social importance of gender. This is to be accomplished by using technology to overcome the limitations that biology has imposed on women. And this does not mean the mechanization of housework. It means taking advantage of such advances as extrauterine fertilization to separate procreation from the institution of the family. In short, to eliminate the family as a social unit. It means to locate procreation and the socialization of children in a variety of social groupings including communes and homosexual relationships.

One of the most carefully articulated radical feminist arguments is found in Firestone's The Dialectic of Sex (1970). Her analysis begins with a critique of Marx and Engels whom she claims only see women "through an economic filter". They, like Freud, were too bound up in their own cultural biases to clearly understand the position of women. Marx and Engels recognized that the division of labour first originated in the family, in the biological differentiation between men and women. But they did not go beyond this to analyze the deeper source of oppression - biology. Freud overemphasized sexuality at the expense of an analysis of power in sexual relationships. Nevertheless there is much to be gained from the methodology of Marxism and the insights of Freud. Firestone's goal was to develop "a materialist view of history based on sex itself".

Biology, specifically reproduction, is the origin of sexual dualism. Women's child-bearing function has made them dependent for physical survival on men. This dependency results in a sexual power imbalance of men over women. You will notice a similarity between this line of reasoning and the biological argument of the functionalists. The difference, however, is crucial. Whereas functionalists see biological differences as resulting in different functions and roles, radical feminists envision the possibility of overcoming them. At our stage of technological development, every possibility exists that culture can overcome biology.

For Radical Feminists, heterosexual marriage is the primary institution for the oppression of women. In other words, the liberation of women is not possible within the confines of the nuclear family. This is in disagreement with traditional Marxists who consider that women's oppression is tied to Capitalism. Firestone's position is that sexual inequality is imbedded in the biological family. This is the basic reproductive unit of mother/father/infant. According to Firestone the cycle of oppression can be broken if women seize control of reproduction.

> So that just as to assure elimination of economic classes requires the revolt of the underclass (the proletariat) and, in a temporary dictatorship, their seizure of the means of production, so as to assure the elimination of sexual classes requires the revolt of the underclass (women) and the seizure of control of reproduction: not only the full restoration to women of ownership of their own bodies, but also their (temporary) seizure of control of human fertility--the new population biology as well as all the social institutions of childbearing and childrearing. And just as the end goal of socialist revolution was not only the elimination of the economic class privilege but of the economic class distinction itself, so the end goal of feminist revolution must be, unlike that of the first feminist movement, not just the elimination of male privilege but of the sex distinction itself: genital differences between human beings would no longer matter culturally. (A reversion to an unobstructed pansexuality--Freud's "polymorphous perversity"--would probably supersede hetero/homo/bi-sexuality). The reproduction of the species by one sex for the benefit of both would be replaced by (at least the option of) artifical reproduction: children would be born to both sexes equally, or independently of either, however one chooses to look at it; the dependence of the child on the mother (and vice versa) would give way to a greatly shortened depeadence on a small group of others in general, and any remaining inferiority to adults in physical strength would be compensated for culturally. The division of labour would be ended by the elimination of labour altogether (cybernation). The tyranny of the biological family would be broken. (Firestone, 1970: 10 - 11).

As is clear from this decree, radical feminists reject the reformist position of changes within existing structures. Their position is straightforward. Marriage is nothing short of slavery for women. In the words of another radical feminist

> Since marriage constitutes slavery for women, it is clear that the women's movement must concentrate on attacking this institution. Freedom for women cannot be won without the abolition of marriage. Attack on such issues as employment discrimination is superfluous....(S. Cronan quoted in Bart, 1971).

iii) Socialist Feminism

Socialist feminists do not give precedence to either class oppression as do traditional Marxists, or sexual oppression as do radical feminists. Their aim is to demonstrate the inseparability of sexism and economic oppression and the need to struggle simultaneously against both. The two are not only "equally oppressive" but are mutually reinforcing. Women play a particularly important role in this relationship. As wives and mothers they are the primary consumers of the goods of capitalism. Their sporadic labour force participation means they are a reserve army of (cheap) labour. Very basically, they reproduce and socialize the next generation of workers.

There are several assumptions made by socialist feminists which make this approach unique. In the first place they reject the idea of lumping all women together and considering them as a class. For not all are equally oppressed. The most apparent victims are economically disadvantaged women. Third World women and working-class women should be analyzed separately from the point of view of both class oppression and male privilege (Jaggar and Struhl, 1978: 85). A second distinction of this approach is its emphasis on the emotional aspects of intimate relationships. Issues such as wife battering are seen as consequence of women's dependency on men. Such dependency is not endemic to families, or to relationships between men and women. It is endemic to Capitalism. Exploring the emotional aspects of family life brings us very close to interpretive sociology. This is to be expected. Most feminist sociologists (not all of whom are radical) argue for the necessity of a sociology of women which begins with her particular world view. (see Bernard, 1973: Smith, 1974). A third distinguishing characteristic of socialist feminism is its location of reproduction, sexuality and housework in the realm of production. Traditional Marxists considered these to be in the private sphere, with the result that women were essentially outside of the class struggle. Their tie to the relations of production was through their husbands or fathers. Thinking of reproduction and housework as materialist social needs relocates women in the class struggle.

Radical sociologists have provided an important challenge to mainstream sociology of the family. Their questioning of the institution of marriage and of the nuclear family, their criticisms directed at sexism in sociology and their reminder of the centrality of the economic structure in the shape of family arrangements pose important questions to functionalism. Feminist sociologists argue vehemently for a sociology that begins with "women's place". Interpretive sociology provides the framework for this beginning. The combination of these two alternatives, plus functionalism will mean a balanced sociological view.

Discussion and Conclusion:

The purpose of this paper has been to outline the basis of a paradigmatic approach to the sociological study of women and the family. As we have explained there is theoretical justification and a long sociological tradition for the existence of three paradigms in sociological literature. Each paradigm is appropriate for somewhat different questions, methods and answers. Together they add to a more thorough and rounded view of women and the family in a personal interpretive sense, as a social structural configuation and as a potentiality.

Yet positivism is far more firmly entrenched in the sociology of the family than either interpretive or radical sociology. However, heavy reliance on positivism has definite drawbacks. It results in a myopic view of the social world and of the possibilities for the discipline. A critical sociology is one which not only recognizes the diversity of approach but takes advantage of the complexity to produce a vital analysis. Furthermore, a critical sociology goes beyond this to question the assumptions which form the basis of established generalizations and methods of theorizing and researching. In the long run, the understanding of sociology of women in the family from the three points of view is a step towards a more inclusive and integrative sociology.

Concluding we would like to suggest that there are four ways that the sociology of women in the family can be improved with a multi-paradigmatic approach. These are: if we ask more questions we will get more answers; there will be a greater possibility of dealing with feminists' critiques of sexism; the methodological approaches will be more varied; and finally, policy decisions will be made on a greater breadth of data.

We have argued that the sociology of women and the family has been carried out primarily in the positivistic paradigm. This means that the emphasis, whether on the level of the individual, the institution or the society, is on the constraints of the existing arrangements and on the description and analysis of social arrangements as they appear to an outsider who is attempting an objective description. That private data is ignored in favour of public data; that the potential future is ignored in favour of the present; that formal arrangement is ignored in favour of the informal; that a single classless society is described at the expense of a complex society and that the power of social definitions are ignored in favour of a model of biological determination is the result of this over reliance on one paradigm.

Secondly, an important undercurrent in radical critiques of the sociology of women and the family is that mainstream sociology is sexist. A sociology of women that 1.) does not begin by taking for granted existing structures and 2.) does begin with women's experience in the social world (not men's assessment of that experience) will go a long way in correcting this sexism. And this is precisely what

radical and interpretive sociologies offer. The consideration of these alternatives has a dual payoff. On the one hand challenges to normative explanation will eventually lead to improving social conditions for women. On the other hand such challenges benefit the discipline of sociology. Feminists are quick to point out that the development of alternative perspectives offers an important contribution to the sociology of knowledge, by demanding a re-thinking of the mode of sociological inquiry. Jesse Bernard (1973) goes even further. She feels we should not ask what sociology can do for women but what women can do for sociology. How in brief can women (and sympathetic male colleagues) "make sociology a better instrument for understanding, explaining and interpreting the way modern societies operate?" (ibid, p. 14).

A paradigmatic framework also provides the basis for a methodological critique of studies in this area. Over-reliance on positivism has meant over-reliance on the methodology of positivism. Questionnaires, scales and other objective tests have been used much more frequently than the observational techniques of interpretive sociology. As Bernard has pointed out positivistic methods also receive more prestige. Bernard refers to the emphasis on "hard" data techniques of the machismo element in research. Another way of making the distinction is in terms of social research as agency ("hard" data) or social research as communion ("soft" data). "Agency tends to see variables, communion to see human beings. Agentic research tends to see sex as a variable, communal research to see women as people." (Bernard, 1973; p. 22). Furthermore, as Bernard points out research using only female subjects is not given the credibility that is given similar research using only male subjects. If mainstream sociology gave more weight to the arguments of interpretive and radical sociologists we could hope to overcome these methodological weaknesses.

A reliance on the three paradigms could mean that in any social policy decisions acknowledgement is made of both the structure as it is and of the potentials for change in the structure. As well understandings of situations from the point of view of not only the observers and policy makers but also from the point of view of those most affected by decisions could be a part of policy decisions.

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