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Understanding the Meaning and Place of Modern Fatherhood  
Through the Lessons of 20<sup>th</sup> Century Scholars

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in

The Department

of

Sociology and Anthropology

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## **Abstract**

### **Understanding the Meaning and Place of Modern Fatherhood Through the Lessons of 20<sup>th</sup> Century Scholars**

**Michael A. Kaiser**

The processes of modernization reduced fatherhood to a role at the extremity of family life. There he would assume his specialized function of earning income for the benefit of his family. The form that this will take will relieve him of the duties associated with childcare and many household functions while his wife will assume the greater part of these tasks. What tied fathers to the family was the sense of place and belonging crystallized by the moral teachings of love.

The focus of this thesis discusses 20<sup>th</sup> century theoretical discussions in reaction to what is described as the decline of fatherhood. Essentially, the modern and late modern family forms are discussed in a model that witnesses the increasing absence of the father in the intimate setting of day-to-day life. Theoretical discussion to this effect focuses on the void that this has left and the meaning that it embodies for men as described by Émile Durkheim, Talcott Parsons, Nancy Chodorow, and Erik Erikson. Given the strong history that fathers have had and the very real problems of childrearing in his absence consideration is given to expectations of fathers. In addition, the meaning of fathering is considered as a tool for generativity and in its absence stagnation. These concepts are further explored in relation to the plurality of family forms into contemporary society with reference to Ulrich Beck's analysis for the need to break out of the "iron cage" of the modern discourse.

## Acknowledgements and Dedication

I would like to acknowledge my great appreciation to Daniel Dagenais who helped guide my studies in placing fatherhood into the broader context and history of the family. With his guidance I was able to construct a deeper understanding of the systems in which fatherhood interrelates. Our laughter together was equally as appreciated.

Dedicated to my daughters Clara and Noémie.

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## Introduction

The contours of modernity changed the family and through its processes displaced fatherhood from its pre-modern location. Conflict would characterize this shift. For fathers this conflict would be diverted toward a search for meaning and place. For women the conflict and struggles resulting from the departure of fathers would have different meanings and problems. As for children, growing up in the absence of their father, the meaning of father absenteeism will be fully realized in many facets of life shaped by financial, psychological, moral, and social impoverishment.

The premise of this study begins by recognizing that modernity has situated fathers at the extremity of family life with respect to his authority and the care provided offspring through their contact with him. The contours of modern fatherhood can be described in terms of his exiting from family life (Dagenais, 2000) that others have identified as father absenteeism (Furstenburg, 1985)<sup>1</sup>. Fatherhood, in the contours of modernity, can be simply described in terms of its evolutionary decline or gradual disappearance from family life.

The very idea of the father lies in the wake of enormous historical meaning and the significance ascribed to it. It is of very little surprise that upon its decline, as influenced through the processes of modernity, so much debate and controversy has emerged around him. The seriousness of his departure is very real. It raises the question of who and how we care for children. It may even give us insight into what our future may enclose.

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<sup>1</sup> The term absenteeism is used in its broad context. The term applies to situations where a father is altogether absent (to which Furstenburg refers) although its use throughout the thesis refers primarily to the result of the shift in relations that occurred as fathers began working outside of the household and outside of the direct presence of his children. Robert Bly identifies this shift clearly in *Iron John* (1992).

This study explores the manner in which the problems associated with fatherhood's decline have been studied. As fatherhood took an increasingly larger role outside of day-to-day family affairs within the household a large void was left in its place to be filled through time by the work of mothers and increasingly the state. Conflict and struggle characterized these changes (as they continue to do so today) but with it also came the search for new meaning, identifying the problems, and attempts to normalize constantly evolving conditions. Theories in sociology and psychology rose up to the occasion attempting to understand the consequences of the decline of fatherhood.

Studies in sociology, psychology, and especially feminism have shed enormous light on the realities that women and children faced as men gradually left the family. Less is known about the impact these changes have had on the lives of men, although by many accounts (as referenced in the bibliography) his decline has left him in despair and wallowing in a void of emptiness or well of unhappiness. The decline of fatherhood in the context of the family has been and continues to be a profound problem for society. The manner of his decline has been handled differently by many influential scholars.

The objective of this study is to isolate the discussion of fatherhood and its related problems among some of modernity's most influential thinkers. The contribution that this study makes to the social sciences is that it identifies scholarly reactions to the decline of fatherhood as it evolves as a historical phenomenon. The uniqueness of this study is that it provides a critical reassessment of some of modernity's most influential scholars from the perspective that they, in themselves, are reacting only in response to the larger concept identified here as the decline of fatherhood while never really identifying the deeper significance of its meaning.

Through the processes of modernity fathers are increasingly located at the periphery of their children's lives that witnesses a transformation in the family without historical precedence. Towards the latter quarter of the 20<sup>th</sup> century this is most vividly marked by what has been termed father absenteeism. However, rather than being a universal phenomenon, father absenteeism (which includes his physical absence as well as his authority) is primarily visible and limited to societies having undergone or in the process of modernization.

Locating the position and authority of fathers in relation to their offspring can be approached through a number of analytical, methodological, and theoretical strategies<sup>2</sup>. These strategies and their arguments will be discussed in forthcoming sections. The manner in which father absenteeism will be discussed here rests primarily in fatherhood's location and construction in theoretical developments with particular reference to the work of Émile Durkheim, Talcott Parsons, Nancy Chodorow, and Erik Erikson. The range of the analysis will not be limited to a critical review of these scholars but will extend into historical analyses and the contemporary discussion of modernity. The choice in scholars derives from the argument that to a great extent their work reflects social living, social conditions, or even social reality. In other words, their critical thinking, analyses, and theoretical developments merely reflect a part of the world they themselves already live in and to this extent also experience. Upon reviewing the texts of these scholars and their concerns involving the location and place of

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<sup>2</sup> The notion of authority applies primarily to governance as that acknowledged by law. For example, under Roman law the Paterfamilias had the power to make most decisions concerning familial matters whereas the modern state would evolve usurping much of his powers. For a deeper discussion on the transition of authority see Durkheim (1978, 1980) or Ariès (1970). Although the formal term of authority is used it is understood that informal networks influence the decision making processes. Authority in its use throughout the text is distinguished from authoritarian rule that more closely exercises power through tyranny.

fatherhood in society one can also begin to appreciate and understand not only the content of their contribution to the subject but just as importantly reflections of the society in which they live.

At this point it is important to note that the scholars reviewed only represent a fraction of those who could be placed in a study of this sort. The choice of scholars derives from the following reasoning.

Durkheim is one of the 'founding fathers' of sociology and spent a considerable time studying the concern of 'domestic organization' (family). His life also locates him in a radical time during which takes place the first crisis in manliness largely associated with the closing of the American frontier, the rise of bureaucracy, and the beginning of what will be a sharp decline in fertility rates<sup>3</sup>. While observing dramatic social change Durkheim will embody these revolutionary changes to the family and in his lifetime never fully come to terms with them as he desperately scrambled to find new meaning for men's lives beyond the family. The tragic death of Durkheim's son in World War I will come to symbolize his deeper questioning of the meaning to one's life beyond the family. He will, of course, attempt to find this meaning in the notion of 'occupational groups' but he himself will never find this sense of place and within a few years of his son's death will die himself. Durkheim did not sit alone in his point of view nor was he the first to voice concern about the changes he observed (e.g. Frederick Leplay)<sup>4</sup>. Durkheim is chosen

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<sup>3</sup> The first crisis in manliness in the modern era occurred at the close of the 19th century. It gave rise to militia groups, scouts, and the YMCA among other groups. A deeper discussion on this subject can be found in Gail Bederman (1995) and Mark Moss (2001).

<sup>4</sup> For a deeper discussion on the debate and concerns of the history of the family (especially as that between Frederick Leplay and Alexis de Toqueville) and its decline see David Popenoe (1988) and Louis Th. Van Leeuwen (1981).

here because of his clarity in marking the final fall of the traditional family that in all likelihood he came to realize in his own life.

Parsons, in contrast to Durkheim, will legitimate the nuclear family's functions and give precise meaning to fatherhood and motherhood in terms of role specialization. Given Parsons' extensive writings on his sociological adaptations of psychoanalysis, the family, and society, Parsons' work is unavoidable in a study such as the present. Perhaps it would be correct in saying that Parsons is quintessentially modern is his interpretation of the family and kinship roles that established place and meaning based on a clearly gendered division of labor.

Chodorow will come to identify some of the problems in Parsons' logic and in particular the problems that the gendered division of labor will entail for women. Fundamentally, Chodorow will recognize the limitations that mothering will place on women while calling for the return of fathers in a way never known to previous generations. The latter will have a late modern twist to it in that it calls for the father to be more active in child caring responsibilities not unlike that which we refer to as "mothering". Like many early second wave feminists Chodorow will discuss fatherhood in terms of his place in assuming more childrearing responsibilities for the primary purpose of relieving mothers of its full responsibility. Chodorow primary intention, however, is not so much to engage men in "mothering" but more so to liberate women from childrearing responsibilities in order for them to work. Chodorow's work is incorporated in this study as representing the second wave feminism's attempt to engage men into childrearing practices as a means to women's liberation.

Incorporating Erikson into this study is somewhat problematic. However, this acknowledged, interpretations of his work have become central in contemporary studies of fatherhood. Specifically, Erikson's concept of *generativity* has come to take a central place in the discussion of fatherhood. Erikson also traces the historical and symbolic significance of fatherhood and as such it is fitting to discuss him in this study. Most important, however, is that Erikson's work deeply grounds itself in ethical considerations for humanity in the tradition of other thinkers such as Albert Einstein. Fundamental to Erikson's work in ethics is that his ideas transcend history in developing a new foundation for humanity that rests in the potential of the individual to give back to life something of meaning and relevance to the next generation. The relevance to this, in respect to parenting, cannot be underestimated but its application is not restricted to it. It is for this purpose that its relevancy to our contemporary condition is so important. It also returns us to what seemed to weigh so heavily in Durkheim's conscience. That is, what will replace meaning to our lives after the family?

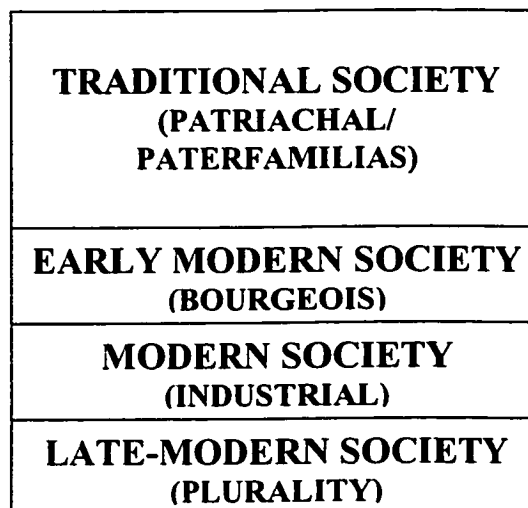
In appreciating that the work of scholars not only reflects critical thinking but also social and political influences (or for that matter realities) the analysis developed here will entail addressing two coinciding objectives. The first objective will be to critically review the discussion of fatherhood as developed in the writings of Durkheim, Parsons, Erikson, and Chodorow. The second objective sets out to contextualize and understand the evolution of fatherhood inherent to modernity and specific to the period relative to the scholars discussed in this analysis. Fundamental to both these objectives is understanding how fathers came to be located at the periphery of family life and the meaning that has been ascribed this condition.

## **Chapter I – Tracking the Origins of Modern Fatherhood**

The objective of this section is straightforward and its intentions are to define the parameters in which the modernization of fatherhood will be discussed. Essentially this section summarizes the socio-historical work of numerous major scholars who have studied modernity and its origins.

Like any historical period the origins of modernity cannot be reduced to a single date or even a single event. However, most historians and sociologists will agree that its early origins date back as far as the Renaissance, the emergence of subjectivity, the arrival of the early bourgeoisie and in particular private property. These early characteristics of modernity to form, however, are hardly indicative of the status quo of the entire period, which is more accurately described in terms of its traditional structures and systems as has been discussed by Anthony Giddens, among others (1991, 1994; Beck, 1992, 1995; Shorter, 1975).

Modernity arises out of traditional society and in the discussion to follow is primarily addressed in the context of its European and (French/English) North American origins and developments. Deriving from its European origins society passes through a series of stages or periods identified in diagram I and discussed below. Depicted in this diagram are the two major periods discussed, namely traditional society and modern society. However, as is easily noted modernity is depicted in



*Figure I: Historical Periods*

three stages succinctly titled early modern society, modern society, and late-modern society. In addition, it is important to note the fundamental characteristics of each period, or sub-period, whose name is marked underneath each society in brackets. Properly speaking traditional society is characterized by its patriarchal structure under the direction and authority of the paterfamilias who through a series of historical events, social norms and mores, and laws establishes his rule as the head of his family and acts as the principle liaison between the family and civil society. Important to note is that in traditional society all activity inevitably evolves around the family. In addition, as many scholars have pointed out, one's destiny is pre-determined by birth (Giddens, 1991). To some extent the transition from traditional society into modernity will begin to alter this reality of destiny.

### **Early Modern Society and the Formation of the Bourgeois Father**

Through a series of events and phenomena that characteristically are described in terms of the rupture from the bonds of traditional society the latter begins to give way to early modern society and its institutional structures. Along with the many observations by the formative scholars (Jurgen Habermas, Edward Shorter, Philippe Ariès, Alexis de Tocqueville, Émile Durkheim) who have studied this period is a deep discussion on the role of the paterfamilias who will no longer exist upon entering the industrial revolution or modernity proper. Much of the authority and governing powers of the paterfamilias will wither away during the early modern period. The paterfamilias will be increasingly replaced with a 'watered' down version of him in the context of bourgeois society and its new family structure and composition. Production will remain principally within the



domain of the household but the processes of individualization and democratization will increasingly characterize household and social activities, and in particular the relations between husbands and wives as well as children and servants. The interplay between household members is clearly illustrated in Molière's play titled *THE LEARNED LADIES*. In this play Molière not only mocks the absurdity of the pseudo-intellectual bourgeois, but more pertinent to our discussion he outlines the weakness and absurdity of one of the central characters, namely the father/husband in contrast to the strong character of his wife, although the latter is also depicted as absurd. Clearly visible in Molière's depiction of power in *THE LEARNED LADIES* is that the wife exercises enormous decision making powers and in comparison makes her husband appear feeble, weak, and even ridiculous. Such relations could not have been possible in traditional society where all decisions were ultimately made by the paterfamilias and virtually uncontestable.

Early scholars such as Frederick LePlay and Alexis de Tocqueville had long observed these changes in paternal authority as giving way to democraticization. It is visible not only in the relations between husbands and wives but also between the father and his children, changes that have been clearly observed by Tocqueville that will be discussed well into the future by other scholars including Durkheim and Parsons. The transformations in relationship will be characterized by a shift from the powers inherent in the structures of traditional society to what will be a more diversified sharing of powers with the husband and his wife and also between the father and his children<sup>5</sup>. These changes will be characteristic of modern democratic processes.

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<sup>5</sup> See de Tocqueville for a deeper discussion on the sharing of authority and democracy in the family (1966).

The early modern father most noted for his adaptation to a new household structure. This structure is fundamentally characterized as the nuclear family whose basis is the conjugal bond between husband and wife. The household will still include the principal means of production, be that in the form of an artisan, shop (early factories), or the farm. In this respect all members of the household will be engaged at various levels with the means of production. Differing from its predecessor, however, is that extended family will be increasingly less present in one household. Rather, extended family members will be located in their own households and whereas the pre-determined and arranged marriage dominated traditional society early modern marriages and their subsequent formation of households will be formed increasingly and characteristically as a matter of necessity and choice bonded by love. The presence and authority of fathers and traditional family bonds will be slowly eroded as the urban migration of youth and young adults begins<sup>6</sup>. It is facilitated by the need for labor created in the early and rudimentary forms of factories that will eventually give way to the industrial revolution and modernity proper (Shorter, 1975).

To sum up, early modern fatherhood (inherently bourgeois) differentiates itself from the paterfamilias of traditional society principally in relation to authority. In the pre-modern family he will no longer exercise over the extended family and increasingly shares it with his wife, and to a lesser degree with his children<sup>7</sup>. The household will now be characteristically nuclear and built upon the conjugal bond between husband and wife

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<sup>6</sup> Edward Shorter's work clearly outlines this transition. It is particularly worthy to note that in Shorter's analysis he give particular reference to the abundance of factory work fulfilled by young women, who he argues exited rural Europe in order to free themselves from the bonds of family social control (1975).

<sup>7</sup> Shorter's analysis is once more pertinent here as is that of Toqueville. In addition, the analysis of Jurgen Habermas (1989) and Ulrich Beck and Elisabeth Beck-Gernsheim (1995) provide clear reference to the tranformations that took place during this period.

as compared to the pre-determined or arranged marriage. Finally, although the household will remain as the principal location for the means of production, urbanization and early forms of factory work will facilitate the growing migration of young people to the cities, the consequence thereof spawning the rupture of intergenerational bonds and means of social control that can be understood as the origins leading to the decline of paternal authority. Upon entering modernity proper, and paralleling the industrial revolution, the bonds and means of social control of traditional society will further decline. It will be marked by a deepening decline of paternal authority over the destiny of his children's fate as he exits the house for work and the state increasingly usurps his rule.

### **Modern Society Proper and the Exiting of Father from the Household**

The industrial revolution has long been associated with the severance of paternal authority with particular respect to the father/son bond. Mytho-poetic scholar Robert Bly fully exploits this association in his semi-historical/semi-fictional story *IRON JOHN*. As with many other scholars Bly locates the principal rupture between the father/child (and in particular that between father/son) as relating to the day that fathers entered factory work alone, which took them away from the family household and away from the ongoing contact with their children<sup>8</sup>. This phenomenon, how it occurred, and its consequences are now well documented and its highlights are outlined below (e.g. Sennett, 1970).

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<sup>8</sup> Bly has developed a too simplistic social history of the transition of men into paid factory work. Essentially, it is important to note that young women were among the first wave of factory workers and would remain in similar working positions up to the point of marriage and of course as a replacement force during war years. For a deeper discussion of the history of women working see the work of Richard Sennett (1970) and Phillippe Ariès (1970).

To associate the rupture of paternal authority and place in family and children's lives as coinciding with the industrial revolution is too simplistic and at times misleading, although there is little question concerning that it had considerable impact. As has been argued above the rupture from paternal rule had begun in the so-called early modern period that evolved over a period of several hundred years. Modernity proper, characterized through its industrial relations, will only deepen the trend away from paternal rule and authority, and through it fatherhood will establish itself in a new form properly called modern fatherhood. As opposed to the bourgeois father of the early modern period the modern father will no longer work in his home and this will indeed reshape the household once again and its members' activities in relation to it. In this emerging modern family fathers will be reduced to a *presence, left to provide* for the financial needs of the family and its *moral authority*. However, as modernity deepens it will eventually erode and challenge even these remaining roles and their associated powers of paternity although these changes are not restricted to the family, but rather, also reflect sweeping changes into societal structures and relations. Through the transitions each and every facet of life will change marked by its particular forms of conflict. What modern fatherhood will evolve into through this will have little in common with bourgeois fatherhood and even less, if anything, in common with the paterfamilias of traditional society.

Rather than entering into the discussion concerning the developments of modern fatherhood through a socio-historical analysis the following will be integrated into an analysis of fatherhood as it appears in classical and neo-classical theory to present day, as was discussed in the introduction. In so doing it is important to point out that although

the early modern period was already discussed what follows is the discussion of fatherhood in modern society proper and late-modern society as it will be considered through a socio-historical and theoretical analysis, the latter in particular as developed in and through the writing of Durkheim, Parsons, Chodorow, and Erikson. The objective of the latter is to locate fatherhood in its theoretical construction in relation to time and space.

## **Chapter II – Modern Society Proper and its Depiction of Fatherhood**

Industrialism parallels modern society proper. One of the central features of this society is that men, husbands, and fathers will leave the home to work primarily in factories and later in offices<sup>9</sup>. In so doing and pertinent to the discussion is that while men entered new work environments women and children remained at home and the classical gendered division of paid and unpaid labor emerges as we continue to discuss it into present day.

To say that children remained at home and under the supervision of women, however, is not entirely accurate because as has been demonstrated by numerous scholars' education and schooling would become increasingly common for children (Dagenais, 2000; Sennett, 1970). This phenomenon is furthermore related to a much larger trend throughout modernity proper that witnesses the increasing role and presence of the state in all facets of society and in particular to the present discussion its integration into what was once solely the private domain of the family under paternal authority. As Dagenais argues, female educators inherited teaching positions in the 1800's and replaced the old system that could be best understood as the apprenticeship of children into life within a family context under paternal authority (2000)<sup>10</sup>. Although still highly influential, the family would take an increasingly different role in children's lives marked by increasing state intervention through such means as education and later social

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<sup>9</sup> Here it is important to note the patterns of work had variations between men and women. It is important to note that women continued to work in low ranking positions particularly up to the point they were married. For lower class women marriage typically ended their means of paid employment. Middle class women typically continued to work although not as extensively. The pattern that is of particular interest to the thesis is that while women came to clearly 'dominate' the domestic scene after marriage the work patterns for men was that outside of the household. For a deeper discussion on this subject see Sennett (1970).

<sup>10</sup> To be clear the early educators were primarily male and it is important to note the conflict and debate that arose between the advocates of the ancien regime and their emphasis on the apprenticeship system as opposed to the new educational system. It was really at the close of the 19<sup>th</sup> century that women would dominate teaching posts. For a deeper discussion see Dagenais (2000) and Phillippe Ariès (1970).

services. Paralleling this is the increasing absence of direct involvement or interaction of fathers in family or household affairs. After all, fathers were away at work frequently working twelve hour days six days a week. Among the first scholars to systematically document these developments and more so to discuss the consequences thereof is Emile Durkheim whose work is now turned to.

### **Émile Durkheim on Family, Paternity, and Society**

The central work of Emile Durkheim concerning the family focuses around his writings on *domestic organization*. Much to his credit Durkheim introduced the sociology of the family to the social sciences by way of establishing it as a study of custom and law, thereby challenging the hegemony of the legal scholars and theologians on the subject at the turn of the 19<sup>th</sup> century (Van Leeuwen, 1981).

Durkheim's work on the family is mostly found in fragments throughout the journal titled *L'Année sociologique*. In addition, other writings on the family are found in his *Introduction to the Sociology of the Family* (1888) and in an article titled *The Conjugal Family* first published in *Revue philosophique* (1890) (Popenoe, 1988; Van Leeuwen, 1981).

As a central theme emerging from Durkheim's discussion on the family is his concern of the increasing trend toward the *decline of the family* and its replacement with the smaller conjugal family centering around his work on *social integration*. As with many of his contemporary scholars Durkheim related the rising levels of poverty, pauperism, and homelessness as not only relating to the side effects of the industrial revolution but more significant to the discussion as a result of the *decline in family*

characterized primarily by its individualism and the increasing intervention of the state. Like many of his predecessors and contemporaries, Durkheim will voice his concerns over the implications of this, while simultaneously searching for a means to resolve its ill effects through the development of a new morality, which he argues is found in “guild-like professional corporations” (Van Leeuwen, 1981, p. 110). What emerges from Durkheim’s discussion is not only a description of the deepening of individualism but a rational means to opt out of and to further sever the ties between fathers and their offspring. In so doing Durkheim creates a thoroughly modern theoretical construct of fatherhood, one that inevitably will justify the father’s alignment with the means of production at the expense of his direct time with the family. What follows is a discussion of how Durkheim arrived at constructing modern fatherhood in a context of a declining family.

### *The Origins of the Conjugal Family*

Durkheim went to great lengths describing the transformation of the paternal family into the conjugal family. In addition, he also described with great clarity the history of the paternal family as deriving from the Roman family and Germanic family, frequently citing the latter’s origins deeply influenced by Christianity that emphasized the “purity” of relationships and “duty” toward one’s wife and offspring. In his review of J. du Plessis de Grenedan’s work in *L’Année sociologique* titled “Histoire de l’Autorité paternelle et de la société familiale en France avant 1789” Durkheim agrees that the origins of the conjugal family rest in the Germanic family (Durkheim, 1978, p 194-5).



In reducing the powers of paternal authority Christianity brought a new “spirit” to the Germanic family, namely in the form of protection to children and other family members under a rhetoric of (Christian) morality. Simultaneously, and over a period of time, however, fathers were also relieved of some of their responsibilities toward extended and immediate family members thus contributing to their greater individual freedom, primarily with respect to seeking or developing working careers. Durkheim traces this to his analysis of legal reforms. Primary to Durkheim’s observation is the question that arises concerning *what will replace family ties that in the previous generations gave meaning to man’s existence*. If, for example, the state should abolish inheritance laws that ensure the transference of the father’s estate to his offspring, which Durkheim predicted it would, what would give men the motivation to work? In addition, his work relating to divorce and suicide (most of which is male) raised considerable concern for the meaning of men’s lives should family be removed from their existence (Durkheim, 1978, p. 243-252)? However, before discussing these elements of Durkheim’s work further it is still necessary to summarize the comparison he makes between family forms, namely that between the Roman family, paternal family, and the conjugal family.

#### *The State, Church, and Marriage*

It is clear in Durkheim’s analysis that the state and the church are increasingly present in what once was the strict private domain of the Roman family. Durkheim establishes this through his analysis of customs, especially as established in law. The

extent of the latter is characteristic of Durkheim's contribution to the field of sociology as outlined in his lectures in Bordeaux where he wrote:

*We learn more about the constitution of a family from even a very little information about the customs relating to inheritance, for example, than we could from a great number of detailed sketches of the family itself.* (Durkheim, 1978, p. 214)

For Durkheim a custom is...

*...an imperative. It does not represent merely what is done most often but what must be done. A custom is a rule which everyone is obliged to obey and which is subject to the authority of some sanction. The existence of a sanction is the distinction which keeps us from confusing custom and simple habit...Since law has to an even greater degree the objective character which is the distinguished sign of custom, and since it has a sharply defined form, it constitutes a document which keeps us from confusing custom and simple habit.* (Durkheim, 1978, p. 21)

Through this approach Durkheim argued that the state has “come to involve itself in domestic life and every day it becomes a more important factor” (Durkheim, 1978, p. 207). Durkheim observes that whereas under Roman law family members became the dependents of the paterfamilias, its modern successor embodied a watered down version of what once constituted the authority of the paterfamilias. This is not to suggest that the paterfamilias acted merely on his own but more so as the “administrator of community property” that entailed not only rights but equally as important responsibilities to the concept of family that at all times overrides the rights of the individual, for the common good of the family. To this extent the paterfamilias “may not dispose of [property] freely, neither during his lifetime nor afterwards. On the other hand, if he is personally the proprietor of the family patrimony, his right to part with it, to disinherit his children, becomes entirely natural” (Durkheim, 1980, p. 194). As Durkheim points out, this so called natural right to disinherit children, or any family member, no longer falls within the power of the father but more so falls under the authority of the state. This transfer of

authority not only held up to the authority of fathers to disinherit children but also applied to the state's capacity to take under its ward, or custody, children who they judged not only abandoned by their fathers but also maltreated by them. The state acted to instrumentalize this takeover of power from the father but was also facilitated by the moral teaching of the Christian Church, with particular reference to the concept of duty. This point will be further elaborated on in the subsection Inheritance Laws to follow.

On marriage itself Durkheim spent considerable effort. Here, in his review of Ernest D. Glasson's article titled *Histoire du droit et des institutions de la France en époque monarchique* (1902) Durkheim points out that whereas in the middle ages marriage consisted of a purely private act "formulated by the consent of the parties", under recommendations of the Council of Trent the act of marriage became both private and public, one that would lay the seeds for the secular wedding and one that soon would become the exclusive "business of the legal experts and parliamentarians". However, before such a time as this could be fully realized the Council of Trent's recommendations laid out the divided rights of the church to administer the sacrament while the marriage contract would fall under temporal authority (Durkheim, 1980, p. 208-9).

In his review of Charles Lefebvre's article titled *Cours de doctorat sur l'histoire matrimoniale française* (1906) Durkheim further pointed out "It is Christianity that has proclaimed that man and wife, by joining together, form a particularly close and even indissoluble moral society, in which the wife is the husband's *associate*". In addition, it is within "Christian societies, the conjugal society has attained a high moral intimacy...But the communal regime is an economic regime. It is an *association of goods, not of people*" (emphasis added) (Durkheim, 1981, p. 219). It is in this latter emphasized point that one

finds the critical distinction between the Roman family and the conjugal family. The package, so to speak, that existed at one point in history has now been subdivided and, as will be argued later, facilitates not only the individualized nature of fathers but more accurately sets in motion mechanisms that frees husbands/fathers from specific obligations or responsibilities for family members, in this instance specifically the wife but also one relating to his children. This, of course, is one of the fundamental differences between the old familial 'communism' and the conjugal family. In the latter what once seemed unthinkable in regards to the customs of the Roman family now became the *separable* governed essentially by the church and the state, the former through its capacity to administer the sacrament and teach duty while the latter will administer the contractual obligations of paternal responsibilities and property all of which were previously the sole domain of the paterfamilias.

Another aspect of marriage warranting consideration is that concerning the marriage of children. Under the former Roman family pre-arranged or pre-determined marriages were common and the father's responsibility, as paterfamilias, entailed ensuring that family members fulfill their 'destiny' for the sake of the family. This would cease to exist as the paternal responsibility toward his children were reduced not only with respect to marriage but a whole range of responsibilities that would cease to exist as of the point of marriage and/or the age of majority. Most significant of Durkheim's observations is that found in his review of J. du Plessis de Grenedan's work titled *Histoire de l'autorite paternelle et de la societe famiale en France avant 1789* (1900). Here Durkheim notes the significance of the transfer from paternal consent for marriage onto the church that not only indicated a shift in specific powers but, more importantly,

witnessed the emergence of a new system of marital regulations set forth by the church. In this respect it somewhat freed fathers from certain responsibilities but in so doing replaced his authority with its own set of regulations to which he was subjected. The central feature or point to this is that fathers played a lesser role with respect to marriage of their offspring.

To this latter respect Christian morality was fundamental in teaching fathers a new ethic of duty towards their children. As Durkheim spelled out, this fundamentally meant that father's are "required to feed the child and see to his education until he comes of age." But whereas this was also true to a similar extent in the Roman family and the paternal family the father's responsibility for this ended upon marriage or the age of majority (Durkheim, 1978, p. 229-30). Under such circumstances considerable pressure must have been placed on fathers to assure not only that his children are fed but that they are in a position to start a life/family of their own at the point of marriage. There is little discussion to this effect in Durkheim's writing but others have addressed this concern, most notably Richard Sennett in his formative study of families in late-nineteenth century Chicago (1970).

In summary of this section it is clear that Durkheim had observed notable changes between the Roman, Germanic, paternal, and conjugal family. The most important of these changes included the responsibilities ascribed through the Christian morality that taught duty. In so doing Durkheim observed the transformation of customs and laws that reflected this new morality. Fundamental to these laws is the reality of the change in family, one that in its earlier form reflected continuity through time whereas the conjugal family lived only for the generation of the couple. In this transformation the church

became ever more influential in permitting marriages that once rested upon the authority of the father while simultaneously replacing paternal authority with church regulations principally deriving from morality, duty, and the administration of the sacrament. At the same time that the church took hold of these matters the state became much more authoritative in assuring that the marriage contract was legitimate, matters that historically fell under paternal authority. While marriage is one aspect of which the state became more influential its authority deepened into other areas of life once under the authority of the father. While this will be discussed below for the present it is significant to note that with the emergence of the conjugal family “kinship relations became altogether indissoluble. The state, by taking them under its warranty, has withdrawn from individuals the right to break them” (Durkheim, 1978, p. 231). Under the emerging regime fathers could no longer disinherit his offspring. The latter fell under the domain of the state, which, as will be discussed, opens new possibilities that can be considered reflective of the deepening of individualism and state intervention.

### *Inheritance Laws*

It is fitting at this juncture to discuss inheritance laws that were a considerable focus of Durkheim’s work. Having studied the laws pertaining to inheritance Durkheim took a position of concern with respect to where his analysis would lead him.

In the decline of the traditional family and the emergence of the conjugal family Durkheim pondered over what would motivate fathers in a society where they were destined for wage labor without the assurance that the wealth this would reap would ever reach his offspring through inheritance. In other words Durkheim predicted that

eventually laws would emerge that would render inheritance obsolete. Of course this has never totally come to be the case but Durkheim's reasoning in this respect is well worth taking note of as it relates very clearly to paternity and the social factors influencing its evolution.

Durkheim writes:

*Not only will the right of testament become absolute, but that a day will come when a man will no longer be permitted, even through a will, to leave his fortune to his descendents* (1978, p. 235)

And...

*[When] everything converges...in proving the right of inheritance, even in the form of a will, is destined progressively to disappear* (1978, p. 236)

The immediate question that arises from such a statement is how did Durkheim arrive at such a conclusion and what did Durkheim predict as the consequences of this? Answers to these questions are found upon examining his arguments.

To answer the first question Durkheim arrived at such a position because he not only examined society via laws that lead him to believe that the disappearance of inheritance was feasible along a line of continuum but also in relation to the period's governing ideology dating back to the French Revolution and its emphasis on the rights of the individual and equality.

In contrast to the earlier family and referring specifically to the conjugal family "Domestic solidarity," argued Durkheim, "becomes entirely a matter of persons. We are attached to our family only because we are attached to the person of our father, our mother, our wife, or our children" (1978, p. 234). Under this set of ideas the traditional and paternal family no longer exist in an arrangement of individuals.

“Each individual,” continues Durkheim, “increasingly assumed his own character, his personal manner of thinking and feeling. In these circumstances, communism became more and more impossible because it, on the contrary, presupposed the identity and fusion of all consciousness that embraced them. We can be certain that this disappearance of communism which characterizes our domestic law not only is not a transient, chance event but, on the contrary, that it will become ever more pronounced” (Durkheim, 1978, p. 234).

Given the birth of the ‘individual’ in the context of the family the very question of social equality arises in Durkheim’s work deriving from a basis of morality. “The moral conditions of our social life”, writes Durkheim, “are such that societies can be maintained only if the external inequalities with which individuals are faced are leveled... This does not mean that men must become equal among themselves- on the contrary, their internal inequality increases- but that there should be no social inequalities other than those which derive from the personal worth of each individual” (Durkheim, 1978, p. 236). With such logic, according to Durkheim, every man is equal to another man and that this equality should not be jeopardized due to inherited wealth. In other words, Durkheim argued that the disappearance of inheritance would emerge because it would measure an individual’s value or potential contribution to society rather than social standing.

It is not clear that Durkheim opposes this logic of equality. However, in addressing the second question raised above Durkheim found the notion that inheritance ‘will’ disappear as deeply problematic. The logic of this is that Durkheim argued “what binds us to our work is the fact of increasing the well-being of our children. If this prospect were withdrawn, this extremely powerful and moral stimulant would be taken



away as well” (Durkheim, 1978, p. 236). In other words, the principal motivation for fathers (primarily) is to accumulate wealth for their offspring. This, it appears, lays down the moral existence for fathers. Fearing that men and fathers would find no reason to work if this moral condition of inheritance was removed Durkheim sought a solution to the problem that fits neatly into his larger theoretical construction of mechanical solidarity and social integration. This solution he found in the discussions of occupational groups.

In arguing that modernity has situated fathers at the periphery of family life it is important to note Durkheim’s emphasis on the important link between the father and his offspring as being one involving inheritance. In the case where inheritance laws would have been abolished so too could any ties between the father and his offspring. However, inheritance laws did not change in the manner Durkheim predicted.

### *Occupational Groups*

Occupational groups, for Durkheim, would give men moral meaning in life and replace that which once rested in their paternal status within the family and of course his analysis that inheritance would one day cease to exist. In the conjugal family Durkheim argued that there was not enough stimulation (moral and economic) deriving from “personal or domestic interest” for men to continue working. As stated above Durkheim argued that the formation of occupational groups would resolve this problem and serve to integrate men into moral society. Durkheim writes:

*...Men must be integrated into some group outside the family, one more limited than political society and closer to us. It is to this group that the very rights which the family is no longer capable of exercising will be transferred. (1978, p. 237)*

Fundamentally Durkheim saw the bond that fathers had with the traditional family being replaced by occupational groups. He argued this point writing "...in my view, only it [occupational groups] can succeed the family in the economic and moral functions, which the family is becoming more and more incapable of fulfilling... Men must gradually be bound to professional life... Professional duty must assume the same role in men's hearts which domestic duty had hitherto played." He concludes this passage: "This is the moral level already attained by the entire elite" (Durkheim, 1978, p. 238).

The rationale given by Durkheim for this argument is that the disappearance of the family has resulted in what can be essentially described as a death in the continuity of the family itself with each generation and along with it conjugal society. Reduced to marriage a man's life derives little stimulation for moral living. Marital relationships, as those forming the basis to the conjugal family, simply "lacked a sufficient time-perspective for this purpose" (as interpreted by Louis Van Leeuwen, 1981, p. 110). In contrast occupational groups could act, in essence, as a "perpetual entity" (Durkheim, 1978, p. 238). Here, as just mentioned, the bourgeois lead the way in forming their professional or occupational groups from which they derive moral existence.

### *On Divorce and Suicide*

Among the better known works of Durkheim is that relating to his study of suicide. Of specific interest to the present discussion is his work relating to his observations of divorce that he correlates with suicide, specifically suicide of divorced men. When addressing the subject of divorce and suicide Durkheim makes very clear that the so-called "facts apply solely to men" (1978, p. 245).

Durkheim was deeply concerned with the contemporary discussion on divorce by “free will” or mutual consent. Fearing that divorce would inevitably become more legitimized and sanctified by the loosening of divorce laws Durkheim wrote:

*We begin to perceive that the extensive practice of divorce never occurs without grave moral disadvantages which should cause reflection among those who demand a reform whose inevitable effect would be to facilitate it still more and to make it a more integral part of our mores. (1978, p. 245)*

According to Durkheim marriage exercised a moral influence on people’s lives, most particularly that of men and fathers. He argued that it integrated them more fully into life compared to that destined toward “the pursuit of ends which are always new and always changing, which grow boring as soon as they are achieved and which leave only exhaustion and disenchantment in their wake.” In continuing Durkheim writes:

*[Marriage] prevents the heart from becoming excited and tormenting itself vainly in the search for impossible or deceptive happiness; it makes easier that peace of mind, that inner balance, which are the essential conditions of moral health and happiness. But it only produces these effects because it implies a respected form of regulation which creates social bonds among individuals. (1978, p. 247-8)*

Having established and supported his arguments why divorce has negative effects (suicide of men) Durkheim concerned himself with the consequences of marriage and any subsequent effects divorce would have on any third party and in particular children. To this extent Durkheim had already observed that the conjugal family had relegated “grandparents” and extended family members to a secondary status with the historical construct of the family. The consequence of this status differential between family members could easily be recognized as a fragile relationship between not only adult family members but in particular that between children and their extended family. The possibility of divorce could only further weaken or threaten the link to the extended

family thereby deepening the extent of moral decay and individualism. He also argued that the very notion of divorce, particularly where children are concerned, is contrary to the concept of marriage and family (Durkheim, 1978, p. 251). A quick interpretation of this implies that the very nature or purpose of marriage and family would be rendered meaningless and eventually obsolete should divorce prevail. And it is important to note that divorce rate during Durkheim's analysis was only 1%.

Fundamentally, Durkheim argued that "conjugal and domestic relations cannot be abandoned at the will of individuals" but that this was so not just for the well being of the family and society but also the individual arguing "that in their own interest these are duties from which the individuals cannot be freed for simple reasons of personal convenience: for man can be happy and can satisfy his desires in a normal way only if he is regulated, contained, modified, and disciplined" (Durkheim, 1978, 252). This theme will re-emerge time and time again in decades to come (e.g. Blankenhorn, 1995).

### *Summary of Durkheim*

In summary, Durkheim observed what was the contraction of the paternal family and what he referred to as the rise in "decadence" of the family. The conjugal family was characterized by individualism at the expense of family 'communalism'.

Durkheim was not perplexed or overly concerned that the family had declined in size but more importantly he sought out new forms of morality within the emerging society in keeping to his larger concerns of social integration. In so doing he agonized over what will give meaning to the lives of (particularly) individual men and fathers where the family no longer offered them a continuity of time and structure. His solution

to this burgeoning concern was the development of professional organizations that would give men a moral existence under the notion of a “perpetual entity”. This would provide them with a new morality and the place to fulfill their duty. Durkheim advocated these guild-like professional or occupational groups that he already observed were present among the elite in society. Durkheim subsequently called for a universalization of these organizations that would organize fatherhood through occupational groups.

The formation of groups arrived of course at a time in history when fathers no longer exercised the same authority in the family as they had in the previous regime. In these condensed families based upon the conjugal marriage bond between husband and wife fathers had less authority and Durkheim documented this through his analysis of laws. The minimized role and loss of paternal authority meant the loss of moral meaning and place in society that as mentioned above could be restored through occupational groups. This of course merely reflected the fact that husbands and fathers now worked increasingly outside of the household and that the household no longer existed as the base for the means of production.

Durkheim perceived divorce as a threat to the family and in particular to that of conjugal society. He perceived it as detrimental to the health of individuals, the latter resting on familial bonds, ties, duties, and a common morality. To take family away, according to Durkheim, was suicidal, especially for men, who as individuals would lose moral meaning in life. As the indicator of this Durkheim used the high rate of suicide among divorced fathers.

In conclusion, and most important to the argument of this thesis as it will develop, is that under the conjugal family Durkheim observed that its members were increasingly

subjects of equality and individualism. Rather than retreating into the family in order to restore lost social morality and duty Durkheim advocated that individuals, specifically fathers, seek social integration outside of it in the form of occupational groups within which they could build a new morality and fulfill their sense of duty to their families but more so society at large. For the sake of the argument this will be interpreted as contributing to the process of distancing fathers from their kin and in particular their offspring in a process that frees them from specific responsibilities of child care and household management but also one that alienates them from the sense of belonging and sharing that goes with a life of direct living and care of family. Durkheim sought the occupational group as a place for men to belong. Given that at the turn of the 20<sup>th</sup> century men were spending more hours at work than anywhere else Durkheim's logic seems quite rational. That is, the occupational group, under a new morality, would serve to give meaning to men's lives while simultaneously directing the monetary wealth gained through work toward the men's families.

### **Talcott Parsons- Modern Fatherhood Legitimated**

More than any other modern scholar Talcott Parsons legitimated modern fatherhood in social theory commencing with the period following World War II. Unlike some of his predecessors (e.g. Durkheim; Engels) Parsons came to regard the nuclear family as far from threatening social integration and harmony, but rather, instrumental in the growth and success of American society and, in general, modern societies. Parsons would describe the family, and its individual membership, in terms of its functions and the role of parenthood would be reduced to the modes "expressiveness" and

“instrumentality”. As with much of modernity these functional attributes would parallel the gendered division of labor, thus ascribing to women the responsibilities of expressiveness and to men instrumentality. The purpose, function, and legitimating of this was constructed for reasons of best integrating and socializing children as functional citizens into their larger membership in society. In keeping with the thesis outlined in the introduction it should be noted that Parson’s work can not be disassociated with its place in time and space which in particular to the post WWII period reflected the widespread optimism shared by the American people and perhaps that of the western world. The period following WWII and that into the 1970’s witnessed enormous economic growth and prosperity for the modern world whose benefits can be undeniably associated to industrialism’s zenith. It is in this atmosphere of optimism Parsons will emerge to blend psychoanalysis with sociology while discussing the role of fatherhood in relation to its place in the family and function in society.

In the chapter that follows Parson’s writing on the family and in particular fatherhood will be critiqued. The principle texts that will be referred to include *Family: Socialization and Interaction Process* (1955) by Talcott Parsons and Robert Bales as well as *Social Structure and Personality* (1964) by Parsons. The following begins with a review of the latter text as it offers enormous insight into the origins of Parsons’ work, especially as it reflects the influence of psychoanalysis.

### *Psychoanalysis, the Father Symbol Complex, and Social Theory*

Parsons gave enormous credit to psychoanalysis and particularly to its arguments concerning personality and moral development. Parsons also devoted considerable time

and space to Émile Durkheim's discussions on moral authority in the introduction to *Social Structure and Personality*. Deriving from this Parsons argues that society constitutes "the system of moral norms" that in turn situates itself on the basis that "society exists only in the minds of individuals". Parsons' concern here rests in the mechanisms that serve the convergence of fundamental shared moral values and the processes of their internalization (Parsons, 1964, p. 19).

Of principle interest to Parsons is the concept of object relations and in particular the meaning of objects from which children learn in the process of socialization. More specific on this subject is that Parsons is concerned with what objects mean in the emotional sense. To this extent Parsons argues, "what persons are can only be understood in terms of a set of beliefs and sentiments which define what they ought to be" (1964, p. 22). This depends on a common culture that links the elements of systems together that are previously "internalized as part of the personality structure" (Parsons, 1964, p. 23).

Parsons begins his discussion of the father symbol precisely in this context whereby he interests himself in the antagonistic relationship between the father and child particular to the oedipal phase that protects the child from its own "love relation to the mother" (Parsons, 1964, p. 30). In this respect fatherhood forges its first central role, that role being to buffer the mother from the child's own aggressive tendencies towards her by transferring them onto the father. More important, however, is that fatherhood is not merely reduced to this single function but more broadly reflects a *symbolic complex* ascribed through *meaning* and *function* that influence the socialization of children, one of which will come to represent the world outside of the small group context, or what is properly discussed here as the family. In addition, and fundamental to Parsons' work, is



the instrumental function of the father, which more often than not establishes the economic, social, and cultural status of the entire family- this resting largely on the income earned by the father/husband (A subject that Parsons discusses much more thoroughly in his previous work).

Before engaging in the discussion of the status of the family as determined by the father's occupation, it is fundamentally important to understand the nature of the meaning and function of the father as a symbol or more correctly in Parsonian terms as a symbolic complex. Fundamental to this problematic is that *fathers 'transcend' the confines of the social group of the family*. To this extent Parsons places fathers in a more strategic location than mothers relative to the world (1964, p. 38). (Remember, Parsons discusses the nuclear family in the context that the father works in the paid labor force while the mother is restricted to unpaid labor in the home and childcare).

To begin his analysis Parsons indicates that society is premised upon a number of subsystems to which the child will have limited and controlled access. The initial subsystem is located between the infant and its mother. Eventually the developing child will be introduced to the larger subsystem Parsons identifies as the conjugal family and with time the child will be introduced to wider social systems (i.e. peer groups) and eventually society at large. In this respect Parsons argues that the father, although standing "at the principal point of articulation between his family subsystem and that of wider society", is "by no means alone". "This", explains Parsons, "is the primary basis of his symbolic significance" (1964, p. 38). *The father will come at first to be seen as the 'object' or actor that represents the outside world and he will be first identified with "breaking up the "paradise" of the child's state of blissful security with his mother –*

even though she [the mother] is an active collaborator in this break-up” (Parsons, 1964, p. 40). In continuing Parsons writes:

*There is good reason to believe that the aggression generated in the process tends to be displaced on the father. The father then tends both to personify the “higher” demands or requirements to which the child is being asked to live up, and thus to acquire a high order of respect and authority and, at the same time, he is the primary target of the aggression (and anxiety) generated in the process. This is the aspect of the father as source of the superego on which Freud laid the greatest stress. With reference to it the father tends to mean both that which is respected and to be, on the one hand, emulated, on the other, obeyed, and at the same time an object of anxiety and hatred. (1964, p. 40)*

In the above quote Parsons introduces yet another of his fundamental points, that being the father as the object of fear but more importantly ‘authority’. This father figure, representative of masculinity in the form of the adult male, symbolic of power and authority will also come to serve as symbolic of the “hierarchal principle of [the] system structure”. It will come to function in the capacity of an instrumental – adaptive role, one that carries the “responsibility for the welfare of the system as a system in relation to the exigencies of its situation and the achievement of its goals.” Grounded within a deeply rooted sex role differentiation the father symbol will find its female counterpart constituting the expressive – integrative role, one that will subsume “the management of the internal motivational tensions of the members and their solidarity with each other to form an integrated group” (Parsons, 1964, p. 43).

Within the confines of the nuclear family Parsons argues that the father acts to a great extent as a role model for both his girls(s) and boy(s). For girls he will represent and eventually symbolize the “ideal of masculinity” while for boys he will not only represent the prototype of masculinity but more importantly *fatherhood itself that first and foremost is recognized in his occupational achievements* that influence above all the status and well-being of his family. Parsons interprets the latter arguing that not only does

the father work for the “firm” but also his family and of course himself. “His responsibility to his family is thus in the first instance discharged by doing well in his occupational role” (1964, p.49). In other words, *the most important responsibility of the father is to provide financially for the needs of his family*. It follows that boys will model themselves on their father while girls will expect that their eventual husbands will provide for their needs modeled from their own family of origin.

Parsons describes the manner in which this takes place in general terms. In fact, Parsons argues that its “generalization” is “crucial” in order for the process to be symbolic. To this respect Parsons identifies two main channels through which the “structure of the father’s role impinges on the child”. The first is as follows:

*The recognition accorded the family to his occupational achievements, above all of course by the mother, but very definitely including his own attitudes toward his role and his success in it, both “intrinsically” from the occupational point of view and in terms of its contribution to the welfare of the family as a whole.*

Secondly:

*The set of concrete interactions of both parents with the child which are congruent in pattern with the father’s occupational role, above all the rewarding of small achievements on the part of the child, and punishment of the corresponding small failures. (Parsons, 1964, p. 49)*

What’s more is that all activity primarily centers upon the father. The reason for this is that the father sits in the most strategic position providing the link between early childhood, or family, “experience with the role structure of the wider society” (Parsons, 1964, p. 50). This is not only true for the position he holds with respect to the world outside of the family but also because he has played such a central role as the “primary agent of pressure” acting upon “the child to abandon his early love attachment to the mother” and what will eventually be the one who gratifies the needs of the child to form

his/her concept of his/her “higher duties”, in essence reflected by Freud’s superego or Durkheim’s moral norms (Parsons, 1964, p. 51).

In conclusion, in *Social Structure and Personality* and in particular in the chapter on the *Father Symbol* Parsons applied psychoanalytic theory to social theory primarily through emphasizing the psycho-social and sexual development of personalities through the process of socialization. Here he applies Freud’s concept of the Oedipal Complex to sociological thinking. In this text Parsons emphasized the role of the father in general terms where his position relative to other subsystems places him in a position of enormous authority and influence. The socialization of children rested principally on his role in breaking up the early mother/child bond and secondly in his occupational success. As will be discussed in the forthcoming section the father symbol is effective primarily within the context of the American conjugal family that among other things Parsons attempted to normalize. This discussion, however, leads us to his earlier work on the family that adopted a much more extensive examination of the family and in particular the adaptation of psychoanalytic theory to social theory in attempt to understand the development of personalities through socialization (in the context of the conjugal family).

#### *Changing the Landscape of the Family: Normalizing the Provider/Breadwinner Role*

Parsons moved away from criticizing the lost functions of the family (i.e. the center of production) that Durkheim had been so concerned with. Central to Parsons’ contribution to sociology and specific to that of sociology’s study of the family is that he legitimized the nuclear family arguing that above all else the “...most important function of the family lies in its contribution to the socialization of children”, which he states in

the preface of his book titled *Family: Socialization and Interaction Process* (Parsons and Bales, 1955, p. v).

Parsons begins his text in challenging the *general disorganization of the family thesis* that among other factors was concerned with the lost functions of the family and in particular its function as a means of production. Parsons cites the example that not too long ago clothing and food production was central to the family's function where at the time of writing these functions were increasingly performed by "outside agencies" (1955, p. 3). Likewise, using statistical data Parsons observed the rise in birth rates and argued that children gave great stability to the family that was not threatened by divorce, which he observed was only predominant among young couples. In contrast to the trends of the previous century Parsons argued that the family had witnessed a period of readjustment that now had stabilized itself in a new society that at its base was the nuclear family (Parsons and Bales, 1955, p. 4-6).

Parsons describes this new family as a residential unit in society dependent on material wealth, mobility through the modern means of public transportation, and geographical and occupational mobility. In America, as elsewhere in the western world, the bourgeois notion of having a "*home of our own*" was not only the ideal, but more importantly possible (Parsons and Bales, 1955, p. 7). And it is relevant to emphasize a home of *our own* because that is what it was perceived as.

Now, given that the traditional family functions had been transferred to other institutional structures and occupational groups in society (*and here we observe a follow up from Durkheim's analyses*) the function of the nuclear family needed to be explained. In so doing Parsons argued that the nuclear family had stabilized itself with a new and

more specialized agency than ever before (Parsons and Bales, 1955, p. 9). Most central to the human agency in this family was the role of the adult male and his relationship to work. This relationship, more than any other factor, determined the status and well-being of the family. This, argued Parsons, was largely because whereas women continued to be anchored in household affairs adult males were anchored in the occupational world. Through the importance of this role the family adult male would come to prominence (Parsons and Bales, 1955, p. 14-15). Parsons sought to explain the significance of this phenomenon.

Within broader society the nuclear family had displaced the functions of the previous kinship system in its economic and political significance, as has already been pointed out. The significance of this is that in larger society family membership was increasingly of lesser importance than the individual. And it is at this level where Parsons argues the central function of the nuclear family lies. Specifically, that the socializing role proper lies in its function of *personality development*, one that is *made* and the family, as worded by Parsons, is the *factory* in which the individual personality is molded, although this factory would give space for affective expression. To this end Parsons describes the two central functions of the family as entailing:

1. "*...the primary socialization of children so that they can truly become members of the society into which they have been born.*"

2. "*...the stabilization of the adult personalities of the population of the society.*"

(Parsons and Bales, 1955, p. 16)

To this extent Parsons argues that the family serves as an institutional system based upon culture and the adoption of values. Within the context of the family, in other words, children adopt the values and ways of the culture around them. As we shall

shortly see, the adult male (or husband/father) serves a particular function in transmitting particular aspects of that culture and one that is central to that culture as alluded to above. Before doing so it is pertinent to look at Parsons' general thesis of the family.

### *Parsons' General Thesis of the Family*

Parsons argues that the family is a highly specialized unit in society whose function serves to socialize children into the larger whole of society. Specific to this thesis is Parsons' general thesis of the family. It is worded as follows:

*...the modern isolated family, incorporates an intricate set of interactive mechanisms whereby... two essential functions for personality [see box below] are interlocked and interwoven... the functions as parents reinforce the functions in relation to each other as spouses. (Parsons and Bales, 1955, p. 21)*

Strongly identified in this quote and further identified in the box to which it refers is a strong sex-role differential. Here, Parsons identifies this differential as follows:

1) "The family must be a differentiated subsystem of a society, not itself a "little society" or anything too closely approaching it. More specifically this means that the adult members must have roles other than their familial roles which occupy strategically important places in their own personalities. In our own society the most important of these other roles, though by no means the only one, is the occupational role of the father."  
2) It is important to balance and regulate the personalities of adult members of both sexes... This is achieved through marriage. In addition, parenthood also requires an "enhanced significance for the development of the parents", after all, children take on a new importance to the parent and this, writes Parsons, needs regulation. This regulation is achieved through the presence of both parents.  
(Parsons and Bales, 1955, p. 19-20)

1. Female: "...a mature woman can love, sexually, only a man who takes his full place in the masculine world, above all its occupational aspect, and who takes responsibility for his family."

2. Male: "...a mature man can only love a woman who is really an adult, a full wife to him and mother to his children, and an adequate "person" in her extrafamilial roles.

(Parsons and Bales, 1955, p. 22)

Now, what is important to our discussion is the 'nature' of these role specific functions. Essentially, as Parsons acknowledges, the function of these roles is to complement one another in developing healthy personalities in children. Each parent, in other words, not only works to regulate a bond that can be too close between, for example, a mother and child, but also only half of the whole. How this 'works' will now be discussed with particular focus to Parsons' discussion on fatherhood. Any further discussion on motherhood will be kept to minimum although it is important to note that Parsons pays great detail to the mother, her role, and her function as he does to that of the father. However, as the subject is on fatherhood the focus will be turned to it alone in the context of the family particular to its location as a subsystem in society.

#### *Sex Specific Roles and Their Link to Larger Social Structures*

The nuclear family, as a subsystem within society, functions to transmit cultural and social values through the socialization of its children from infancy onward. The first and principle socializing agents acting to transmit these values are the adult members of the family. Principle to this system is the strict division of gender into male and female roles already introduced above.

Before entering this discussion it is important to acknowledge the general functions of the family as a subsystem and the role of parents. The nuclear family, as a subsystem, is interrelated to other structures in society. The family acts as the arena, or 'factory' as Parsons calls it, to transmit the values and customs associated with that society. Within this subsystem the primary function of the parent is to act as a socializing agent. More importantly, however, is to understand that the "...child is never socialized



only for and into his family of orientation, but into structures which extend beyond the family, through interpenetrating with it” (Parsons and Bales, 1955, p. 35). This suggests that the family is a reflection of and serves a function for the society in which it thrives. Parents within the family therefore exercise agency to transmit the ‘ways’ of society to their children such that they may learn their way around through the processes of their maturation. This maturation, then, according to Parsons, takes place through a series of psychosexual developments. Through these, in addition to what has already been identified, parents complement each others’ sex specific roles in a variety of ways for the successful passage into subsequent stages, the last of which is the leaving of one’s parents into the development of a new family modeled on the family of origin, namely the nuclear family model that will in turn function as the transmitter of cultural and social value systems within the small group context.

Parsons outlined strict feminine and masculine identities that in contemporary terms can be understood as gendered mystiques. In his writings Parsons goes much further to elaborate on these two identities and their function as links between personality development of children adopted from the roles of parents and their position in society as a whole. Properly speaking, Parsons identified the role of fathers as instrumental while the mother’s role would be considered expressive. Once again, as socialization of the child with the end result directed at the latter’s full integration into society. To this effect the following section reviews Parsons’ discussion and development of these role identities.

## *Symbolic and Representational Dimensions of Father and the Collective*

Although this subject has been already discussed above to some extent its centrality to Parsons' work requires further elaboration.

*One cannot treat the father as an isolated object and analyze the relation to him, without treating him as part of the nuclear family in a social system. Similarly he is not "internalized" or "identified with" out of the blue without reference to the pre-existing structure of the personality system. (Parsons and Bales, 1955, p. 92)*

To resolve this problem Parsons argues that a "reorganization of the total personality as a system" must occur. To do so Parsons argues that children are positioned in relation to six sub-collectives. In reference to sons Parsons explains this in the following manner:

*The focus of a son's identification with his father is his self-categorization as belonging to the "we-males" subcollectivity- which is the same thing as saying that he and father share the same category of "maleness". It means that this "we" is set over against a "they" of the females to which he cannot belong. But there is another they to which he cannot belong...parents. (Parsons and Bales, 1955, p. 92)*

Two collectives are identified in this passage. The meaning of the quote is relatively straightforward. Essentially, it entails the function of children learning to adopt common values within collectivities that are associated with a variety of subsystems that relate to a multitude of other subsystems that together constitute the system at large. Children must learn to identify with these subsystems but must also learn to adapt to the interconnectedness of them as a whole. Here lies the key to understanding instrumentality.

In the case of the son a fundamental task in the development of his personality is the internalization of the father subsystem and male collective. This may not be an easy task as the son cannot realize his full potential within his family of origin. Simply speaking, this occurs because the position of father and husband is already taken,

evidently by the son's very own father. The only way out of this predicament, occurring upon the successful completion of the Oedipal crisis, is upon the son's exit from his family and into his father's role in the context of a new family. Now, this point has already been made above and is repeated here simply to precisely locate the purpose or function of the father's position in relation to his son's development. The transformation that took place entailed the son's realization that his relationship with his mother is restricted by none other than his father. In the eyes of the son, so to speak, he must come to grips with the *superiority*, *power*, and *authority* that his father possesses. This is of course not all bad because the successful completion of the stage will stimulate the son's eventual departure from his family to form a new one where he in turn will hold the position entailing power and authority. In this, and vital to Parsons' argument, is the transmission of cultural and value systems and the very complex of the father's instrumentality. Namely, because the father represents the world at large and the subsystems attached to it the son will come to associate himself with those value systems as he moves beyond the confines of the "narrower system" of the family collective. That is, the son will move away from the "we" the family in order to more fully integrate into society at large. In addition, the father's connectedness to extrafamilial functions will be more fully internalized upon the son's realization of the father's "responsibility for the family" (Parsons and Bales, 1955, p. 93). In this highly conflictual process, frequently illustrated in out of control terms of clashing heads driven by fatherly stubbornness against youthful virility, the son must resolve himself to accept that he can not successfully be his father's equal in the context of the one family. It is the stage that

fathers hold their ground and the son comes to realize that there is only one head, or chief, to this family.

In contrast to the Oedipal crisis for the boy its female counterpart lies in the Electra Complex. For the girl this entails realizing that she cannot replace her mother and the latter's relationship with the father. This, argues Parsons, is true unless there is conflict between the spouses that opens up a complex alignment between the daughter and father. It is also possible to reverse the situation whereby the mother could align herself with son in conflict situations (Parsons and Bails, 1955, p. 100). Such alignments are problematic and differ from the nature of collectives. In this respect the two can be considered polar opposites.

#### *Father – Backing up Mom*

While many roles of the father have already been identified the father role specific to ego development is well worth a deeper look. Earlier it was noted that Parsons discussed one of the important role of fathers was to set a limit on the mother/infant bond through the general concept of the incest taboo. Adding to this discussion Parsons stresses the importance of the need for fathers to back up mother's suggestions. More precisely, Parsons observes that a father's behavior is most effective if it is consistent with the mother's behavior thereby presenting the child (or ego) a "single object". To the child the father is perceived as coming in from the outer world and acts to destroy the inner tranquility of the infant's blissful existence with the mother. The father's role, however, does not only function at this capacity although it is the focus of relative aggression. The function of this particular role in the child's psychosexual development,

according to Parsons, is one of absorbing the inevitable conflict directed at the mother when the latter must break the bond to direct her attention to her other familial responsibilities. In addition, the father's new role also acts to facilitate the mother's transition to parent while also moving from primary caregiver to the provider of "love". To this effect the child will now be rewarded with love from the mother rather than care of a more instrumental nature (Parsons and Bales, 1955, p. 208-9). Important to recognize in this is that the father's role is of a predominantly symbolic nature but one which will eventually take its place in the form of a presence captured by the phrase "wait until your father gets home".

### *The Reason for Two Parents*

In the chapter written by Morris Zelditch (in Parsons and Bales, 1955) the author takes to task the question why two parents are necessary? The simple answer given by Zelditch is as follows:

*For one thing, to be a stable focus of integration, the integrative-expressive "leader" can't be off on adaptive-instrumental errands all the time...And an uncertain managerial responsibility, an unclear definition for decisions and for getting things done, is also clearly a threat to the stability of the system. (Zelditch in Parsons and Bales, 1955, p. 312)*

From this quote one can infer that parents have specialized roles that consume much of the time and effort. This is in line with Parsons' theory that the family serves a specialized function in society. Within the family then, the parents serve specialized functions.

Zelditch argues that parents work as a team within a small group setting that is structured around age-sex differences. An example to illustrate this point is, once again,

the early attachment that the child forms with its mother. This so-called subsystem must come to an end whereby the function of the father is to “pry the child loose” from the mother-dependency, as worded by Zelditch. The dynamics of this was already discussed above and need not be repeated here. However, it is important to once again repeat that parents must work together through these formative transitions in what Parsons has called collectives in order to develop one dimension of the construct “they” and of course the child’s introduction to “I”. Given the importance of the individual in society this construct is paramount in the child’s development and of course the first “concrete” presence of the father, one of many to come.

Zelditch makes further observations well worth taking note of in developing a more complete understanding of the dynamics of the American family, which of course has its similarities to most western family forms.

One of the Zelditch’s observations includes recognizing that the American family maintains relatively flexible patterns. That is, fathers help mothers in general housework and childcare while the mother can supplement the family income through paid employment outside of the home. However, this flexibility is secondary to the more important and dominant functions of the sexes. To this effect Zelditch makes clear that the American father, by definition, must “provide” for his family. Ultimately, his primary responsibility lies in supporting his wife and children. This he fulfills in the level to which he performs successfully in his occupational role, whose benefits (as already indicated above) ultimately determine the status of the family. His primary function then is to provide an income, to be the “breadwinner”. As Zelditch adds to this:

*There is simply something wrong with the American adult male who doesn't have a “job”...the cult of the warm, giving “Mom” stands in contrast to the “capable”.*

*“competent”, “go-getting” male. The more expressive type of male, as a matter of fact, is regarded as “effeminate”, and has too much fat on the inner side of his thigh.*

(in Parsons and Bales, 1955, p. 339)

### *A Few Words on Authority and Fear*

Underlying the responsibilities of the father towards his wife and children is his authority that depends on his ability to oversee family affairs from his position as its leader. Of course, this is done because the system dictates to him that he is “obliged to do so in the interests of his wife and children” (Zelditch in Parsons and Bales, 1955, p. 345). In the nuclear family this authority is exercised and legitimated on a democratic basis. This is to say that his authority is only instituted in so far as it is based upon “good judgment” as opposed to an outright obedience to his rule (a point that Durkheim similarly stresses). This he exercises with his executive capacity, a point forwarded earlier by Parsons.

Fear enters the discussion where the mother’s ability to maintain order and discipline are exhausted. This is reflected in the well known phrase of the era – “Wait until daddy gets home” (Parsons and Bales, 1955, p. 340). In general, due in fact to her greater presence in the household, mothers exercise considerable authority but one that is maintained largely through praise, persuasion, and endearment. These methods help her maintain her position and simultaneously do not overlap into the realm of the father’s authority that above all else has the “restraining” capacity through harsh discipline. This of course is in contrast to those means available to the mother.

### *Concluding Parsons and Functionalism*

There is little question that the basis of Parsons' work develops upon a gendered division of labor. Parsons outlines the role of men and women within strict gendered limits assigned by sex and their roles as mother and father follow suit. Clearly visible in Parsons' perspective is that ideally the two sexes work hand in hand as one to form the whole. This whole is realized in the form of the nuclear family. Within the family and in their specific gendered roles mothers and fathers will act out specialized functions in domains that Parsons describes as "instrumental" (for fathers) and "expressive" (for mothers). Upon developing this further Parsons argues that these specialized roles will act in unison to shape the individual personality of the children born into that family. In turn, these personalities will reflect the values of the culture in which they develop that in America will reflect individualism and the democratic principals. Equally as important is Parsons' description of the family in terms of a small group that above all else facilitates the learning of values and ways of society at large.

There is little question that parental roles are largely interpreted within a psychoanalytic framework. To this extent the constant psychosexual struggles and conflicts are central to Parsons' theoretical development. Rather than enter this discussion again what is important to recognize in this approach is the interactive role mothers and fathers play in the interests of the child. Here, as mentioned in the paragraph above, 'mom' and 'dad' work as a team. But it is not enough to merely acknowledge this teamwork without regarding the importance of the father's role Parsons ascribes that by any interpretation indicates the greater importance of the father. How so?



As has already been interpreted by Daniel Dagenais the father is the instrumental leader of family that above everything else is determined by his occupational status (2000). In other words, the father's occupational status situates the family financially and socially in society. In addition, and in his role within the family, the significance of this is recognized in terms of his authority that he must assume in order to be what it is he represents and symbolizes. Namely, the father assumes the role of the individual... the one "out there" and the one that is idealized. It comes not only with tremendous pressure and responsibilities in and of itself but must be lived and relived within the family unit. No one else fulfills this role. And this takes into account that fathers sometimes help out at home and that women work for a family's secondary income.

In addition, and of equal importance, to this role is the meaning it bestows within the nuclear family unit. In the eyes of the child the father comes not only to tear apart the blissful tranquility of the mother/infant bond but its function will come to represent the link between the child's family and the world. The father, in other words, will act as the liaison between family life and society.

In conclusion, concerning Parsons, is that father consists within three major functions. The first function is to earn an income that will serve its central importance in locating the family status in society. His second major function lies in his role in the psychosexual development of his children primarily as it relates to the development of the child's sense of "other" and "we", which in turn assist the child's moral development. Finally, and perhaps most important of all, is the father's function as symbolic and instrumental leader.

## **Nancy Chodorow – Functionalism, Feminism, and Fatherhood<sup>11</sup>**

It is under somewhat strange circumstances that Chodorow's *The Reproduction of Mothering: Psychoanalysis and the Sociology of Gender* (1973) would appear in a text on fatherhood, or at least its use in this thesis needs explanation. The reason for incorporating Chodorow in this text is that she makes frequent reference to fathers and in particular the void his absence leaves. To this extent Chodorow frequently compares and contrasts mothering to fathering in the nuclear family context often reflecting Parsons' work. Where Chodorow differs from Parsons, and for that matter also the Frankfurt School under Theodore Horkheimer (to whom she makes frequent reference), is that in her analysis of the family's function she is critical not only of the contours of industrial capitalism but also the manner in which it favors men over women. Fathering is thus discussed by Chodorow in contrast to women's mothering that she identifies as a "central and defining feature of the social organization of gender and is implicated in the construction and reproduction of male dominance itself" (1973, p. 9). It is in this sense that Chodorow's analysis critically examines gendered roles that much of social theory, and in particular psychoanalytic and Parsonian theory, takes for granted or biologically determined. Her feminist approach questions how and why social theory has tended to focus heavily on "social organization in terms of what men do, and where men are located in that society" and in so doing ignoring the female reality (1973, p. 12). Blending psychoanalysis, functionalism, critical theory and feminism Chodorow opens the discussion on the social reproduction of women's mothering, attributing mothers agency in socializing girls and boys into gendered mothers and fathers. As such she

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<sup>11</sup> Chodorow was chosen on the basis of her critique of Parsons' thesis. In addition, her psychoanalytic approach represents the dominant discourse of the first three quarters of the twentieth century. In addition, her work still included a father in the family that is an important feature to feminism of her generation.

argues that women mother while men father differently in a capitalist society that facilitates the ongoing inequality between the sexes. The following discussion on Chodorow's work examines the place in which she allocates fatherhood primarily through and in reference to her analysis of the reproduction of motherhood.

Chodorow begins her analysis in deriving western society's nuclear family as the by-product of industrial capitalism that in its process has "removed grown children, grandparents, and non-family members from the household and sharply *curtailed men's participation in family life*" (emphasis added) (1973, p. 5). That the 'curtailing of men's participation in family life' is identified lends support to the argument outlined in my introduction. Namely, that father exists on the periphery of children and family life.

Although Chodorow recognizes a major shift in location of fathers and the mode of production she notes that the direct care of infants and young children has always under women. The central change during the rise of capitalism with respect to parenting was that boys no longer would join their fathers as of around age six. Rather, childhood (so to speak) was extended and the principal person responsible for the day-to-day care of children (boys and girls) was mother and this extended into school. In the modern family girls not only continued to mature under the guidance of mothers but now boys would also. This observation is not unique to Chodorow. What is unique to Chodorow's analysis is that she takes this phenomenon to task in looking at the effects it has had on boys and in particular their gendered maturation into men and fathers. In addition, and more pertinent to her analysis, is that she examines how girls are reproduced into mothers to their disadvantage relative to men and fathers. The question then is how this happens?

Chodorow is quick to point out that there is very little biological matter that determines “maternalness, and there is little substantial evidence that nonbiological mothers, children, and men, can parent just as adequately as biological mothers and can feel just as nurturant” (1973, p. 29). To explain the difference Chodorow rejects the biological argument and argues that the differences between mothers and fathers and their behavior toward children result from socialized behaviors. In other words, women mother because they were socialized to mother while men father because they were socialized to do so. The gender neutral tasks of parenting are thus divided into socialized behaviors determined by sex.

As opposed to the training or socializing of children into specific roles in earlier societies Chodorow notes that socialization in the modern family is a highly psychological affair. The function of this psychological process of socialization is to assimilate and organize internally the “generalized capacities for participation in a hierarchal and differentiated social world, rather than to training for a specific role” (1973, p. 32). Parenting is thus “an eminently psychological role in a way that many other roles and activities are not” (1973, p. 33). Chodorow derives at such a conclusion from examining the differentiated roles men and women take with respect to parenting and their place relative to the larger society. This reality is further deepened when income inequalities are considered, thus making “rational, and even necessary, in any individual conjugal family for fathers, rather than mothers, to be primary wage-earners...[under such circumstances] mothers, rather than fathers, are the primary caretakers of children and the home” (1973, p. 35).

Taking into account that mothers mostly develop a deep and intimate relationship with their infant the father's role comes into play primarily with respect to differentiation. Here Chodorow discusses the typical identification of the infant's realization that the mother is not his to possess and that the child must begin to realize his individual self. This process is now well theorized in psychoanalytic literature and has already been discussed in the chapter on Parsons. Chodorow further identifies that the child uses not only the father "in its differentiation of self, but also that the father "enables more firm differentiation of objects. The infant, as it struggles out of primary identification, is less able to compare itself and its mother, than to compare mother and father, or mother and other important people she relates to" (1973, p. 71). In other words, the child learns the various possibilities and dimensions of "we", "us", and "them". However, linking the father to these broader and more "generalized other" constructs fathers are the first to act in the processes of differentiated for he, unless assuming a 'mothering role', is introduced to the child as a separate being. Later the father will assume a greater role in introducing a broader world to the child to which effect Chodorow acknowledges further the contributions of Parsons' work, most particularly that relating to the family's social status gained through his income.

Much like Parsons Chodorow recognizes the affective qualities of mothering, arguing that much of this relates to the bond created between a mother and her daughter. The argument that Chodorow draws forth to explain this lies in the mother's ability to relate to daughters experientially much more than she can with sons. In contrast, sons not only do not have mothers who experientially relate to them but also grow up in the shadows of their father's presence. To this effect Chodorow argues that through these

childhood experiences, in relation to parental roles, masculine personality “comes to be defined more in terms of denial of relation and connection (and denial of femininity), whereas feminine personality comes to include a fundamental definition of self in relationship.” The result of this is that “relational abilities and preoccupations have been extended in women’s development and curtailed in men’s” (1973, p. 169). This, according to Chodorow, reflects the form of social control of women in society that is exercised through family organization. It is, ultimately, grounded in the expectation that women will “much more than men find a primary identity in the family” presumably at the expense of neglecting career ambitions or an identity outside of motherhood or that outside of relational capacities (1973, p. 175). Men, in contrast, are socialized without a definition of self and lack relational abilities for the basic function of better performing in the work environment.

Given that a husband and father’s central role lies in his capacity to provide for his family’s needs he is described by Chodorow as constituting the *independent individual*. He essentially *represents himself primary centered around his career*. In contrast, his wife and children are represented through him to the point of course where they adopt his family name. Their contribution to the family’s well being is marked differently than that of the husband/father. Their contributions also largely reflect the direction and place given to the family through the father’s position in society. Much like Parsons, Chodorow identifies the leadership qualities awarded husbands/fathers although she recognizes the neglect society has given women’s unpaid work and particularly that associated with mothering.

Chodorow considers carefully the development of masculine identity in boys. It is in the process of socialization within the family that boys learn their masculine identity. However, Chodorow points out that this identity is largely shaped through the boy's relationship with his mother and his fantasies about what being a man is. Firstly, Chodorow acknowledges that mothers relate to their boys differently than they do with their daughters, a point already discussed above. In the absence of the father that is typical of the nuclear family the boy's contact with his father is limited. Thus the boy overhears discussion from his mother and other women (most of whom are mothers also) and forms an image of what being a man and father is. Finally, when father is present, household attention is drawn to him yet his relationship with his son will be different than that between the mother and her daughter. The difference lies in how fathers view their children in comparison to how mothers view their children. The primary difference here lies in the observation that fathers relate to their children in terms of what they will become as adults rather than in the more present concerns. Much like mothering relates to the reproduction of itself so too does fathering reproduce itself as a gendered reality. The reasoning given by Chodorow to explain this lies in the driving forces of capital industrialism that requires disciplined semi-skilled and skilled workers who are less preoccupied with affective needs and more ready to do the job (1973, p. 180).

Growing up male prepares men for their position in family life and the work force. The emphasis placed on achieving family status through the male's occupation has resulted in his superior position within the family and society. This is what is meant when the head of the household is a man. The latter recognizes overtly the importance of the male position relative to socio-economic status. It is not only a superior position but also

characterized as highly rational in contrast to characteristics that are described as more emotive or relational. At both conscious and unconscious levels boys absorb these conditions and combined with their fantasies of superiority form their masculine identity. However, Chodorow points out problems with this both in terms of creating misogynous tendencies and also in contrast to the realities of men's work that through automation no longer reflects the child's fantasies about what work is really like. This, writes Chodorow, is increasingly marked with less autonomy and a "submission of their lives to work requirements", a point not unlike that made by Erikson (identified in the next chapter) (1973, p. 184). In terms of misogyny Chodorow argues that the mother-boy relationship is marked with erotic and sexual overtones while at the same time "leads to disparagement and fear of women" (1973, 184). Unfortunately Chodorow does not develop this point further but as we shall see in the forthcoming section on Erikson this subject is more deeply developed.

Parenting in the nuclear family has been described as psychological. It is not until the latter stages of her book that Chodorow develops this argument. Here, once again, she draws upon the contributions made by Parsons and Horkheimer to draw her own conclusions. The socialization process prepared men for subordination to authority. It also helped facilitate their participation to an alienated work world that above all is achievement oriented. Relying on psychoanalysis the major explanation of this lies in its formation in the Oedipus complex. Compared with traditional society where boys entered their father's world at around age six the transformation undergone through the combined processes of this transition would no longer take place in modern capitalist society. The difference between the two eras is marked by the distance between the father and his



children (and in particular boys) in time and space that would develop into a new relationship principally in relation to authority. To explain the significance in this Chodorow draws upon the analysis forwarded by the Frankfurt School. What follows is a lengthy quote that identifies this transition and the impact it has had on boys and fathers:

*As more fathers became dependent on salaries and wages, on the vagaries of the labor market and the authority of capitalists and managers, the material base for their authority was also eroded. Fathers reacted by developing authoritarian modes of acting. But because there was no longer a real basis for their authority, there could be no genuine Oedipal struggle. Instead of internalizing paternal authority, and developing a sense of self with autonomous inner principles, sons remained both fearful of and attracted to external authority. These characteristics were appropriate to obedience and conformity on the job in the world at large. (Chodorow, 1973, p. 189)*

Significant to the quote above is the identification that the nature of paternal authority has changed. This analysis is consistent with that offered by Durkheim in his description of the differences between the authority of the paterfamilias and paternal authority. Psychologically, however, Chodorow points out the significance this has on the development of the boy's ego namely developed in the absence of a deep contact with the boy's father resulting in the fear of him (the father) and yet an attraction to the external authority from which he comes.

The result of that identified in the above paragraph is that the family structure demonstrates its "malleability" as well as its "lack of internalized standards". In addition, Chodorow points out that one of its psychological dimensions is the place that manipulation begins to play in it. To this point Chodorow argues that the same mechanisms are reflections found in modern capitalism. Namely, manipulation plays a major role in "media and product consumerism, to the attempt to legitimate a polity that serves people unequally" (Chodorow, 1973, p. 189). In addition, as quoted...

*The decline of the Oedipal father creates an orientation to external authority and behavioral obedience. Exclusive maternal involvement and the extension of dependence create a generalized need to please and to “succeed,” and a seeming independence. This need to succeed can help to make someone dependable and reliable. Because it is divorced from specific goals and real inner standards but has involved the maintenance of an internal relationship, it can also facilitate the taking of others’ goals as one’s own, producing the pseudo – independent organization man. (Chodorow, 1973, p. 189)*

It is on this very important point that Chodorow develops her feminist argument that subordinates women to men by men. The argument identifies men as subordinating women as a “defense against powerlessness in the labor market”. In addition, “Male denial of dependence and of attachment to women”, continues Chodorow, “helps to guarantee both masculinity and performance in the world of work. The relative unavailability of the father and overavailability of the mother create negative definitions of masculinity and men’s fear and resentment of women, as well as the lack of inner autonomy in men...” (1973, p. 190).

While Chodorow shies away from developing, or explaining, these ideas further she concludes on the note that the purpose for all this lies in preparing and socializing boys into their submissive and obedient roles of workers while girls are socialized, or reproduced, into mothers in order to perpetuate modern capitalism and male domination. This theme, particular to that of male submissive and obedience to waged work, will be picked up in the subsequent chapter on Erikson as he explores its dimensions and more so its consequences.

That fathers play such a large role outside of the confines of the family abode has particular consequences on the family structure, some of which have already been identified and especially Chodorow’s concern with male dominance. In addition to the family functioning on a psychological plain Chodorow acknowledges also the raise and

dominance of the emotional elements of the modern family. Both the psychological and emotional dimensions of the family emerge parallel to the decline of other family functions common to the traditional family (i.e. food production, care of elderly...). In other words, parenting as a psychological and emotional phenomenon emerges to replace other family functions that historically were the domain of women's work. As such, women inherited these roles (largely constricted in their affective dimensions). In identifying the processes that this entailed Chodorow explains this phenomenon, with respect, to reflect a form of social control clearly identified as women being subordinate to men. Therefore, in assuming that women are no longer needed to fulfill the roles of the traditional family, the means through which men continue to exercise control over women are through the psychological and emotional domains of mothering. It is through these domains coupled by the day to day physical care of children and household management that women and wives, through mothering, reproduce their subordinate role to men, husbands, and fathers. Outside of the problems that this creates and which feminist analysis has shed tremendous insight the structure that places fathers outside of the immediate functioning of the family places enormous strains on the mother-child relationship. As has been identified above this develops, according to Chodorow, a misogynous view of women through boyhood. For girls the process differs somewhat because, given her sex, she finds little possibility to escape her mother's dominance. Here a father plays a central role but does so largely from a distance that results above all else on the reliance of the daughter learning about her father from her mother. Thus, she relies on her mother's interpretation of the father that does not always reflect the reality of the father, nor the daughter. In addition, and to this respect, fathers are largely left to the

imagination of daughters, and sons, whereby “his real strengths and weaknesses” are inaccessible (Chodorow, 1973, p. 195). Who the father is is thus largely left to interpretation and imagination both of which come to serve a symbolic function above all else. One of the many problems that arises out this fantasy of what one’s father is that it creates unrealistic expectations of what it is to be a man, husband, or father based on differences between the ‘real’ and ‘ideal’. This is not only true for girls but also boys who grow up largely in the shadows of an idealized image of his father.

### *Conclusion*

There is very little question that Chodorow offers a feminist critique that establishes the reproduction of motherhood as that created out of the subordination of women by men. Fundamental to Chodorow’s argument is that women, through mothering, have been subordinate to men. However, Chodorow draws a critical distinction between traditional forms of subordination of women to its modern counterpart. This differs lies in the decline of the women’s roles in productive elements of the family structure to its more psychological and emotional component. In other words, modernity witnessed the replacement of women’s direct role in the means of production central to the family structure with a role that would increasingly emerge as psychological and emotional. This phenomenon was consolidated through the processes of modern capitalism that, above all else, placed men (women and children) into wage labor first in factories and later in bureaucracies. While Chodorow is not alone in this analysis her contribution is found in her analysis of how man’s role came to be superior to that of women. Namely, Chodorow challenges the supremacy of men’s waged labor over that of women’s unpaid labor, largely as it is reflected through the act of mothering.

In addition, she is critical of the manner in which this came to be, identified as women adopting the emotional and psychological dimensions of modern family structures. This is not to say that men and fathers do not play a role in these dimensions of the modern family structure, but rather, Chodorow points out the restraints and limitations that modern fathering in contrast to mothering places on individuals and the socializing processes of children. In so doing Chodorow adopts the critical approach forwarded by Frankfurt School in attributing many of the constraints for the modern family as resting in the capitalist production and reproduction.

Toward her final analysis of the family structure and its gendered roles Chodorow offers suggestions on how to 'improve' the present state of family affairs. To this extent it is well worth quoting her at length:

*Families create children gendered, heterosexual, and ready to marry. But families organized around women's mothering and male dominance creates incompatibilities in women's and men's relational needs. In particular, relationships to men are unlikely to provide for women satisfaction of the relational needs that their mothering by women and the social organization of gender have produced. The less men participate in the domestic sphere, and especially in parenting, the more this will be the case. (Chodorow, 1973, p. 199)*

In her final analysis Chodorow outlines not only the limitations of the present family structure and its gendered roles but offers a solution to reducing the subordination of women but also a liberation for men's denial of relational needs (that, incidentally, contributes to men's domination of women frequented with misogynous overtones). This is found in the final quote as follows:

*Fathers are supposed to help children to individuate and break their dependence on their mothers. But this dependence on her, and this primary identification, would not be created in the first place if men took primary parenting responsibilities.*

*Children could be dependent from the outset on people of both genders and establish individuated sense of self in relation to both. In this way, masculinity would not become tied to denial of dependence and devaluation of women. (Chodorow, 1973, p. 218)*

### **Erik H. Erikson – Evolution, Man, and Toward Generativity**

Erikson's development of generativity offers an image of the mature healthy person, one who has successfully mastered the challenges of previous psychosexual stages and now enters a period in his life where the object of his focus revolves around the virtues of 'care' and 'love'. As with all of Erikson's stages of life generativity is countered with its polar opposite, namely, and in the case of generativity, stagnation. Inevitably the latter finds its roots in the lack of maturation in a previous period, one that now inhibits the growth, maturation, and mastery in another of life's stages in an epigenetic journey. In addition, unforeseen circumstances may also result in stagnation particularly for an acute period of time typically stimulated by a tragic life event.

Generativity vs. stagnation is the seventh stage in Erikson's cycle of life. It is the period in a man's life that is marked by the realization that he desires to give back to life something in return for his own existence. It is marked by the passage of a man's life where he lives in the present acting as the transmitter of time between the past and the future reflective of his own place in life. It is the time in a man's life where his focus is on action and doing rather than youthful challenges. It is the period that man thrives in ritual and institution using them fully to transmit the essence and wisdom of past generations into future generations acting to blend them as one. Man in action and doing bridges the generational gap in continuity with time.

Or, on the contrary, man realizes that he has nothing to give back or contribute to life and thus succumbs to the stagnation that this entails. Or, for the self-centered individual his fate too is stagnation. Stagnation reflects the loss of meaning in life itself and the inability to realize physically and spiritually the larger place one has in a larger construct of life other than one's selfish needs.

Before entering into a deeper analysis of generativity the chapter, devoted to Erikson, begins with an overview of Erikson's theoretical developments as they pertain to the eight stages of people's lives. Here, as will be the case in the forthcoming discussion on generativity, Erikson's use of the term 'man' will be substituted with people. In addition, it is also well worth noting at this point that although generativity will be largely discussed in reference to fathering the concept has a much larger range of reference that will be explained more clearly in the section devoted to generativity. Generativity, after all, is the expression of care that can be expressed through parenting or many other means. It is discussed primarily in reference to fatherhood given the subject of the thesis but it is not restricted to it.

Having outlined the eight stages of a person's life cycle the second section will discuss the central themes of fatherhood as they appear in Erikson's work. Central to this discussion will be the relationship between a father and his son as this is so central to Erikson's concerns and theoretical development.

Erikson's construction of generativity is of enormous contribution to the social sciences and humanities and therefore careful consideration will be given to its significance and adaptation into contemporary theory, especially that of generative fathering.

### *The Eight Stages of a Person's Life Cycle*

Within the psychoanalytic school Erikson studied under Anna Freud in Austria before immigrating to the United States where he developed most of his work. His particular blend of psychology will combine dimensions of social psychology and developmental psychology. Deriving from these studies Erikson developed a keen interest in the superego or “moral man” and his greatest contribution to the social sciences and humanities lies in his construction of the ethical dimensions of generativity.

Erikson focused his studies beyond the field of childhood development and within this area of concentration expanded psychology into studying adulthood. His work touches on the most productive and reproductive years of man and frequently his writings on the subject evolve with an overtone of ethical, moral, and philosophical consideration. This, however, may only be because having passed through childhood, adolescence, and young adulthood much of a person's life centers on the transmission of morality through traditions, rituals, institution, and most of all the daily routines and work or in sociological terms praxis. In this sense it is important to acknowledge that Erikson is first and foremost a developmental psychologist and secondly philosopher, ethicist, moralist, and ideologue. These dimensions of Erikson will become clearer in subsequent sections. Finally, it is important to note that Erikson also studied as an artist and throughout his critical writing incorporated his critique of cinema giving passionate critiques of numerous classic films. The latter is without doubt reflected in much of his writing.

The field of developmental psychology in Erikson's time was still largely restricted to the study of infancy and childhood. Erikson's first masterful work also



focused in this area and was titled *Childhood and Society* (first published in 1955). Its focus primarily centered on infancy and childhood and the psychosexual challenges posed by each stage (although the latter chapters dwell far beyond in its subject matter). These challenges (although different than those presented in earlier stages) continue through adolescence and into adulthood. These stages, their challenges or conflicts, and their accompanying virtues are reproduced below. The box outlines the developmental age, the conflict associated with it, and the virtue attached to it. The intent of reproducing the developmental chart here lies in locating generativity as the second to last of eight live stages.

*Figure 2. Eight Stages of Man (Browning, 1973, p. 181)*

*Age                      Nuclear Conflict (challenge)                      Virtue*

1. Infancy	Trust vs. Distrust	Hope
2. Early Childhood	Autonomy vs. Shame	Will
3. Play Age	Initiative vs. Guilt	Purpose
4. School Age	Industry vs. Inferiority	Competence
5. Adolescence	Identity vs. Identity Confusion	Fidelity
6. Young Adult	Intimacy vs. Isolation	Love
7. <b>Adulthood</b>	<b>Generativity vs. Stagnation</b>	<b>Care</b>
8. Old Age	Integrity vs. Despair	Wisdom

The stages indicated here are here are epigenetic. In this respect “epi” means upon, upon and “genesis” refers to emergence. Therefore, “epigenesis” means that one item develops on top of another in space and time” and it is “extended to include a hierarchy of stages, not just a sequence” (Erikson in interview with Evans, 1981, p. 21-2). Therefore, as stated earlier, the man to be (or father in the case study) must successfully master the challenges of each stage in order for maturity to occur, from which success in subsequent stages largely depends.

The focus of this study is not to review the developmental stages one by one. Rather, of greater interest is the position and ways that parents, and more particularly fathers, relate to their role specific to the stage already identified as generativity vs. stagnation. That is, in their own growth and maturation parents develop alongside their offspring and this too is dependent and evolves around the number of children within the family. On this point Erikson writes “We distort the situation if we abstract it in a way that we consider the parent as “having” such and such a personality when the child is born and then, remaining static, impinging upon a poor little thing” (1963, p. 69). In other words, the personalities of the parents evolve and grow largely as influenced by the child or more so with children. The meaning of this is that children act to direct their parents’ maturation and the mastery of the stage itself between parental responsibilities and personal growth- the two being combined. As Erikson puts it...

*For this weak and changing little being moves the whole family along. Babies control and bring up their families as much as they are controlled by them; in fact, we may say that the family brings up a baby by being brought up by him. Whatever reaction patterns are given biologically must be considered to be a series of potentialities for changing patterns of mutual regulation. (1963, p. 69)*

What this implies is that children play an enormous role in the healthy growth and development of an adult, provided that the adult has mastered the challenges of previous stages and that by choice the adult chooses parenthood- for here it is important to realize that generativity can be expressed in many more forms other than parenting (see discussion below).

Much like Parsons, and to a lesser extent Durkheim, Erikson views the extended life of childhood in western societies as relating to the levels of increased complexity and specialization. Institutions outside of the family begin to take on a more specific role in

forming the child's world view, one that reflects one's own already shaped but evolving specialized role. This is most visible in the stages of identity formation particularly relevant in the adolescent age, a subject in which Erikson has written extensively (*Youth: Change and Challenge*, 1968; *Identity: Youth and Crisis*, 1968).

Erikson is very much concerned with the rapid changes occurring in society reflective of modernization. And here, once again, the role of generative man is to stabilize and slow down the pace of change making it more acceptable and adaptable for the young without actually limiting or altering the realization of evolutionary change. As will be discussed shortly generative man achieves this through his work and play whose basis forms and lies in institutional and ritual.

The relevant question to this section on the eight stages of man still remains and its importance will be central in the discussion to follow. That is: What role does man have in his capacity to father?

In its abstract sense this question has already been partly answered. That is, generative man as father is the transmitter of a way of life sculpted in society through culture. However, in western society the role of generative man and specifically father is to work. It is through his work that the generative father (a term not used by Erikson) gives back to society what he has inherited from it. In the traditions set forth by his own father and culture generative man embarrasses his work in self-realization or in Maslovian terms self-actualization. Why this should be is never clearly identified in Erikson's writing other than in the manner it relates to cultural and perhaps historical determinism. Where Erikson's work does expand, however, is in the area of explaining how this role functions that will be the subject of discussion shortly.

For the present moment it is important to emphasize the principle role of the father in his capacity to work. It is his principle place and role in life during the generative years. It is the place in which he has developed an expertise that above all else allows him the capacity to contribute to society. This is not to say that this is the only manner in which generative man may express himself or realize his generativity for the latter has many more potential applications. However, it is enough to realize that work is the central location of generative man while all other acts of generativity are of secondary importance.

As generative man's role in work took him away from his daily presence of home life it is important to consider how children are socialized in his relative absence. Here it is important to distinguish between the work of men and that of women outside of special situations where a man or woman makes an institutional devotion other than that made to one's family (incidentally- the latter arriving in stage six of the life cycle marked by intimacy vs. isolation). In the context of the modern family the work of husbands/fathers and wives/mothers clearly distinguishes itself although Erikson clearly reasons for other possibilities and plurality (once more, a term not used by Erikson). None-the-less it is reasonable enough to discuss generativity within the nuclear family as forwarded by Erikson as primarily divided into work specific to men and women as reflective of the dominant gendered reality.

Unlike Parsons Erikson makes no judgment on the differences between the importance of men's work and women's work. Erikson does not suggest that man's work is any more important than women's work. In Erikson's theoretical development of generativity self-realization develops within one's capacity to work and that through

work one expresses his/her care or generativity. It just so happens to be that men's work takes them outside of the home while women's central place of work is within the home. One assumes that both forms of work are important locations for generativity and one is left to believe that outside of biological differences both man and woman are generative and their place in and relative to society is culturally determined.

With respect to the paternal role and its influence on the formation of children Erikson brings forth an intriguing observation not unfamiliar to anthropologists and others who study familial roles in other cultural settings. This observation concerns the model from which boys form their male identity. Rather than the father acting as the model from which boys will learn their identity Erikson suggests that boys will model themselves after their grandfather based upon their mother's interpretation of her father. This phenomenon is inextricably linked to historical American ideals based upon folklore and myth, one that pits a rather feeble father against a mighty grandfather, namely the mother's father, whose mystic is shrouded with that of the Founding Fathers, his resourcefulness, ingenuity, and freedom- attributes that the biological father in the mid-20<sup>th</sup> century, in comparison, fails to compete with. This arrangement that emphasizes the folkloric and mythological ideals of the mother's father, according to Erikson, is "ingenious" because it allows the boy to bypass his father's comparative weaknesses through the boys attachments to another man, perhaps an uncle, family friend, or ideally the grandfather himself (1963, p. 312). To illustrate the strength of Erikson's argument a lengthy quote to follow is required. It reflects upon what Erikson calls the epidemic of "momism" among American youth whose frustrations and anxiety revolve around the reality and the ideal set forth for them to live up to.

*The grandfather, a powerful and powerfully driven man- according to a once widely prevailing American pattern, another composite of fact and fiction- sought new and challenging engineering tasks in widely separated regions. When the initial challenge was met, he handed the task over to others, and moved on. His wife saw him only for an occasional impregnation. His sons could not keep pace with him and were left as respectable settlers by the wayside; only his daughter was and looked like him. Her very masculine identification, however, did not permit her to take a husband as strong as her powerful father. She married what seemed, in comparison, a weak but safe man and settled down. In many ways, however, she talks like the grandfather. She does not know how she persistently belittles the sedentary father and decries the family's lack of mobility, geographic and social. Thus she establishes in the boy a conflict between the sedentary habits which she insists on, and the reckless habits she dares him to develop. At any rate, the early "Oedipus" image, the image of the overpowering bigger and greater father and possessor of the mother, who must be emulated or defeated, becomes associated with the myth of the grandfather." (Erikson, 1963, p. 312-3)*

Some years later Richard Sennett will make a similar observation in his well documented study of a Chicago suburb where he notes the relative weakness of husbands and fathers in their (in)abilities to exercise authority and gain higher social standings for their families, which could virtually only be achieved through higher paid work, most of which did either not exist or was inaccessible (1973). This observation and those identified above will play a fundamental factor in the formation of children and most notably, as argued by Erikson, the personality development of boys and their passage into adulthood. This then leads the discussion to the second section of the chapter discussing Erikson.

### *Fatherhood, Paternalism, and Patricide*

With some hesitation fatherhood, paternalism, and patricide are lumped together under the same sub-title. The reason for this, as shall be demonstrated, lies in the richness that Erikson discusses them and their connectedness. This is not to suggest that fatherhood leads to *patricide* but, rather, that a connection is possible, one that not so

much shoulders blame onto the father but more so *reflects social and cultural forces or expectations*. As such, not ignoring individual responsibility and choice, for which Erikson is a strong advocate, patricide will be discussed in its representational and symbolic sense thus ascribing it with social and cultural meaning as opposed to the random act of an individual. That patricide is discussed under the same subtitle as fatherhood and paternalism is merely to suggest that there is sometimes a thin line that separates them where social pressures predominate.

The discussion introduced above concerning the weakness of fathers needs further consideration. The father is intimately aware of his 'shortcoming' and according to Erikson is more or less content with this image of himself within the familial structure and his role as parent. There comes a time in a male adolescent's life where he is taller and perhaps even stronger than his father. According to Erikson this does not necessarily pose a threat to the father. Erikson observes that the tensions which arise from this reality are frequently met with joking gestures that often enough arrive between the father and his son and assume a marginal overtone or ridicule of the mother's ideation of masculinity. Erikson points to his observation that these ridiculing gestures frequently elude the mother's conscious understanding or she accepts them for little other than nonsense. However, and very important to Erikson's argument is that this gesturing acts to create a father and son fraternal bond, one that has replaced old paternalism that tied the son to his father. The gesturing between father and son placed at the margins of the mother's consciousness thus acts to bring them together in a shared experience that Erikson describes as fraternal and one that separates them from the female other.

In a historical or evolutionary time line fraternity replaces paternalism and its presence first develops within the home. To this Erikson adds that while the household is dominated by the authority of the wife/mother the father will through time transmit his sense of manhood, although with exception of the ridiculing this will take place outside of the home in such activities as camping or sporting. This is the world then that the son will be initiated into manhood with his father and in the absence of his mother. It will take place not only in sporting events and camping trips but also the world of business and work as well as the clubs. These will establish brotherhoods and fraternity. Once again the process begins at home between the father and son but soon extends into the world beyond the household. Erikson's description of this fraternal bond resonates Parsons' work as well as Durkheim's on the subject of occupational and interest groups. To be clear, the message is that the home is no place for a man.

Outside of its relationship to introducing the son to the outer world fraternity serves another purpose in buffering the son from any authority a father could exercise over him. Fraternity could not be possible with an authoritative father and so the father accepts his son's ways (representative of the grandfather ideal described earlier) because he realizes that in the American ideal of individualism and democracy the son must find his own way for no person can be dominated. It is therefore fruitless to try to stop the son in his crazy and daring endeavors. And in so doing the father hopes that his son will in fact do better than he himself has achieved. This then is modern fathering American style. It involves the act of elevating one's son above one's own achievements. Its foundation lies in democratic principles as well as the traces of gender divisions.



In drawing a contrast to this American ideal Erikson discusses Hitler's relationship with his father. As was typical of many fathers in Germany at the time of Hitler's childhood fathers ruled with enormous power and authority. However gigantic and powerful this father may have seemed to the adolescent and young adult its actual authority will be undermined upon the realization that at work the father frequently maintains a subservient position to another higher authority figure. It is at this age that youth also begin to see other dimensions of their father beyond that of his work place. This could typically be seen witnessing his father's "excessive sentimentality when he drinks and sings with his equals". Erikson will recognize this as the son's introduction to "Weltschmerz: a deep doubt of the dignity of man- or at any rate of the "old man""(Erikson, 1963, p. 332).

Thus far we are presented with the image of a father who within the family exercises a high degree of discretionary authority but in contrast, at work, he assumes a subservient position where he merely an average "Mensch" not unlike his wife and children that in his home he dominates. In addition, his "excessive sentimentality" reflects a deep inner insecurity that upon its expression signals defeat, as a man and as an individual- for he is not alone in recognizing the Weltschmerz. He does so with his equals. According to Erikson the son will see his father's own unhappiness as one reflected in time where the father too once saw himself in the position of the son in the past. But rather than breaking out of what Erikson terms a vicious circle the father succumbs to his 'predestined' station in life, the result of which derives his Weltschmerz. The son, who witnesses his father's impotence, succumbs to "pity and disgust" for the *old man*, the result of which is a harsh rebellion against this weakened and despised father,

the form of which is much stronger than in other cultures where sons too must come to terms with their relationship to their father.

Remembering that Erikson makes his analysis of Hitler's relationship to his father as representative of a dominant German phenomenon it is important to recognize Erikson's attempt to explain the rise of Hitler and of course Nazi Germany. To this effect Erikson argues that the passage into manhood for German youth has been difficult and historically marked as a period of heightened conflict much more so than other cultures. Historically Erikson notes that prior to Hitler's days adolescent sons were seen scurrying off to foreign territories and lands for their apprenticeship. Beginning in the time of Hitler's youth this had changed for the better part. However, even in these pre-Nazi days "some kind of break would take place". This break, writes Erikson, frequently took place under "paternal thunder and maternal tears; or it was reflected in more neurotic conflicts which were less effective because more individualized and often more neurotic; or it was repressed, in which case not the father-boy relation, but the boy's relation to himself, was broken" (1963, p. 334). Here too Erikson observes that the conflict may not necessarily involve the father himself but schoolteachers who at that time were nearly "exclusively male". The conflict that would result, while directed at the schoolteachers, would more so reflect a rebellion against "Burgerlichkeit- the German boy's contemptible world of "mere citizens", that which is inevitably embodied by the boy's father (Erikson, 1963, p. 334). The result of this derives from the realization that the German father, who in the boy's mind should represent strength and independence, in reality does not exist.

This rebellion and conflict, in the buildup and life of Nazi Germany, manifests itself as large groups of youth whose contentions were levied against the weakened and

pitiful state of their fathers. Erikson notes that Hitler too lived this through his youth and rebelled “successfully” whereby he broke the “vicious circle” of repeating his father’s fate into a subservient civil station. Hitler rejected his father altogether and in so doing rose above his father’s pitiful state to become the self-anointed Fuhrer. The symbolic and representational significance of this was the ultimate rejection of fatherhood and a world to be opened to youth who saw their fathers in a similar vein. The rise and popularity of the Nazi Jugend thus bases itself in the wide spread cultural expression of young men who, due to historical synthesis, rebel against the particularly difficult German father complex. Hitler’s rise to power and “success” thus reflects only the sentiments of the youth whose conflict ultimately lay between them and their fathers. And perhaps as a final word on this Erikson suggests that the possible success of sons in breaking out of this circle is also the unconscious wish of German fathers themselves. In conclusion, the rise of the Hitler youth is understood as a cultural expression of German men searching for their leaders, their fathers, and for the nation that never existed. To date, unlike most other nations, Germany exists in the absence of its founding fathers.

Patricide is the most difficult subject to be touched on. Why is this? Erikson will speak about it in its historical Russian context arguing that outside of its apparent and *cruel slaying of one’s own son the act is lived out as the expression of a cultural and social expectation*, although one that is never openly talked about. As Erikson argues, the Russian people need the authority of one leader because it is a part of their cultural and social history and make up. How, then, does Erikson derive at such a conclusion?

Erikson's observations and analysis derives from legend, literature, art, and film. Frequently depicted in these works is the violence ensuing between the father and son in and around the age of late adolescence and young adulthood that corresponds to the period discussed above concerning German fatherhood as well as the concerns over the American youth. Most prolific of the works that Erikson studies relate to the stories of *Ivan the Terrible* and *Peter the Great* as well as the legend and story of *Maxim Gorky*. To their effect Erikson notes that the Russian male aristocracy has a long history of slaying their sons although the story of Maxim Gorky re-emerges to serve the propaganda machine of the Bolsheviks, the latter consisting of metaphorically elevating sons beyond the authority of the fathers thus freeing them for admittance into a higher order- namely Soviet style communism.

*Ivan the Terrible*, who Erikson notes was known as *Ivan the Severe* in his day, murdered his eldest and most beloved son with his own hands, the image of which is immortalized in paintings. Peter the Great, similarly, killed his son but through the use of his police. The meaning of these slayings and the cruel nature of their violence owe their origins to historical processes dating back one thousand years in Russian history. During this period Erikson notes that the presence of the Vikings allowed the lands of the Russian Kingdom to be divided among the king's sons. The result of this was a prolonged period of war between the regions governed by the princes. The brutalities that these "feuds" and wars brought the Russian peasantry produced deep anxiety and would eventually leave deep scars. The resolve of this particular period and problem was found in the peasantry seeking solace in one king, the princes' father. It was under the latter, who would become known as the "strong father", that peace would eventually be restored

by bringing the princes together. In the failure to do so it became the responsibility of the king to still restore authority and thus peace even it required him to kill his own son or all of them. And so he did. “Thus in early Russian history the stage was set for the interplay of the people who needed guidance and protection against enemies; the oligarchic protectors who became petty tyrants; and the central super-tyrant who was a captive of the oligarchy and a secret redeemer” (Erikson, 1963, p. 373). To this effect the Russian peasantry preferred one tyrant over many such that they could know where they stand- a truly Machiavelian ideal. But while this conflict between princes is legend of a millennium ago its re-enactment is relived as the form of patricide that filters through the Russian aristocracy, the effect of which is to assure the peasantry stability and to give the latter a secured place upon which they know where they stand. To this effect, finally, is that patricide assumes a representational and symbolic quality, one that imposes an expectation upon the king to re-enact the murder of his son that symbolizes to the people their need for the dominant authority figure. By way of conclusion, then, let me quote Erikson at length again in order to capture the fuller implications of his analysis:

*Maybe our concept of history must be expanded to include an analysis of the dynamic demands made by the governed masses on their most “self-willed” masters who thus are forced to act out the conflicts of human evolution on the macroscopic stage of history: in the sense, perhaps, **kings are the toys of the people.** (Emphasis added) (1963, p. 376)*

Upon deeper interpretation one may very well be left pondering whether fathers bestowed with all this authority so far discussed in this analysis are truly only the reflections of the people’s will rather than subjects of his excessive tyranny?

### *Generativity- The Ideal and Theoretical Implications*

Generativity, as was stated in the introduction to the present chapter, is reduced in definition to the act of caring and the capacity to give back to life something of value particularly as it “concerns the establishment (by way of genitality and genes) of the next generation...Generativity is primarily the interest in establishing and guiding the next generation, although there are people who, from misfortune or because of special and genuine gifts in other directions, do not apply this drive of offspring but to other forms of altruistic concern and of creativity, which may absorb their kind of parental responsibility” (Erikson, 1959, p. 97).

Generativity relates to the period in a person’s life devoted to the various forms of care this could entail. It concerns the developmental stage in mid-adulthood in Erikson’s epigenetic chart of the eight stages of the life cycle.

It is important to note that generativity is not restricted to parenting but more so reflected in a state of ‘doing’ that one perfects in the mid-adult stage. It represents and symbolizes the meaning of parenting or in more contemporary terms mothering to be more exact (for fathering generally speaking instills a different meaning as Chodorow has outlined). Erikson points out in dialogue with Richard Evans that in “this stage one begins to take one’s place in society, and to help in the development and perfection of whatever it produces. And one takes responsibility for that...I use the word “generativity” because I mean everything that is generated from generation to generation: children, product, ideas, *and* works of art” (Erikson in Evans, 1980, p. 50-1).

The alternative to generativity is stagnation. Erikson writes:

*The principal thing is to realize that this [generativity] is a stage of growth of the healthy personality and that where such enrichment fails altogether, regression from*

*generativity to an obsessive need for pseudo intimacy takes place, often with a pervading sense of stagnation and interpersonal impoverishment. Individuals who do not develop generativity often begin to indulge themselves as if they were their one and only child.* (Erikson, 1959, p 97)

Put simply, stagnation suggests that the individual is self-absorbed (a term used by Erikson but more so by Don Browning) and unable to “care for” or “take care of”. In addition, stagnating individuals are unable to act in a reflective way that allows them “to take care not to” do something destructive (Erikson in Evans, 1980, p. 53). Persons experiencing stagnation do not have the capacity to see beyond their own needs and outside of the present. They are stuck. What produces this situation, theoretically according to Erikson, lies in the history of the individual and the successful mastering of the previous stages of the epigenetic chart. However, as will be discussed shortly, stagnation can also be the result of social/political or circumstantial situations that impose conditions onto an individual in order to produce a climate where stagnation is more likely to occur.

It is fundamental to understand that Erikson’s generativity and stagnation are concepts that apply to adult development. For the present moment the discussion will focus on those specific to generativity. Stagnation will be discussed separately later.

“Generativity”, writes Erikson, “encompasses the evolutionary development which has made man the teaching and instituting as well as the learning animal. The fashionable insistence on dramatizing the dependence of children on adults often blinds us to the dependence of the older generation on the younger one” (1963, p. 266). After all, as the idea already quoted earlier conveys- the child is raised by the adult as much as the adult is raised by the child. They depend on each other for their own growth and maturation. The manner in which this works is put as follows:

*Mature man needs to be needed, and maturity needs guidance as well as encouragement from what has been produced and must be taken care of...Generativity, then, is primarily the concern in establishing and guiding the next generation... [However, it is] an essential stage of the psychosexual as well as on the psychosocial schedule. (Erikson, 1963, p. 266-7)*

Generativity thus bases itself in the act of giving and caring that not only benefits children and future generations but also benefits generative man himself (and of course woman). In many respects it gives meaning to adult life through the act of caring and the ability to care derives meaning in itself. The notion of “being needed” does not so much imply dependency but more so a place of being through “doing”. This, it appears, is central to our social being where society gives meaning and place to all of its individuals. Generativity is the manner in which it is expressed in adulthood. It is humanity’s individual expression upon his/her arrival in the seventh of eight life stages. His/her success in being generative is measured in his/her ability to express his/her individually sculptured form(s) of caring as they take their shape in acts of giving and caring, ones whose benefits will only be seen in future generations (perhaps without notice) but whose benefits are reaped by generative man/woman knowing that s/he has given something of value in the present, that as influenced from the past will also contribute something of value to the future. Generativity thus bridges the past and future through acts in the present.

Given that generativity is first and foremost a concept, stage specific, applied to the adult it is important to discuss it in reference to the adult. The healthy adult is generative and it is inherently a part of his/her personal development. However, generativity is comprised of altruistic acts directed at a sustainable future frequently without self-realization and simply acted out as common sense.



Generativity implies basic virtues that have been clearly outlined by Browning when he states “generative man contains within himself a fund of basic trust in the world and hope for the future” (1973, p. 182). In addition to trust generativity also implies a basic sense of hope and faith in not only the present condition of man but also humanity’s future. To this point Browning writes: “The basic trust and hope that has accrued to him through a favorable coincidence of internal equipment and external environment is now something he is concerned both to pass on to and elicit from others” (1973, p. 183).

Generative man is driven by a “higher-order rationality and consciousness” that guide his emotional and more passionate drives. He is also in constant dialogue and conflict with younger generations through the use of a higher morality and institution. The outcome of the years for doing this will result in a new morality replacing the one that he grew up with in his childhood and youth. However, elements of the former will be present, thus stabilizing and reducing the speed of social change. The manner in which generative man achieves this is through his discipline in work and institution where he is practical above all else. In so being and doing he ‘teaches’ youth about the places that they will one day occupy (Browning, 1973).

Having identified generative man Erikson concerns himself with modernity and its embeddedness in rapid technological change that impinges on psychological and spatial orientation. The concern centers on the fact that large groups of youth are so rebellious against the institutions that they themselves will one day live in and reproduce. Brown interprets this rebellion as being deeply entrenched in a hatred of the institutions (1973, p. 206). The troublesome point is that we live in and are comprised of the very institutions that are hated.

### *Conclusion to Erikson*

Erikson provides us with an outlook on fatherhood particularly as it relates to influencing the world views and actions of sons. Simultaneously, Erikson speaks of fatherhood in terms of its symbolic meaning of which the most radical conclusion is that fathers express cultural and social expectations. In other words, they act in a manner expected of them. In this respect they reflect the will of the people rather than acting as independent individuals. In addition, the notion of father is largely developed and 'enforced' through a system of mythological ideals against which many men fail to compare. In spite of these shortcomings cultural and social mechanisms have evolved to establish masculinity particularly as it relates to the father/son relationship.

Erikson's concept of generativity is of particular significance and its contemporary application will be discussed below. Particular to generativity is the notion that it is an important developmental stage for adults that in the latter's capacity to care for and give back to life something of value that will transcend his life. The capacity of an adult to act upon and fulfill this act of generativity results in his healthy maturation and entry into old age. Generativity is acted upon through institution and disciplined work prescribed by culture. Generativity is, fundamentally, the act of doing or fulfilling one's duty that stabilizes rapid change and transmits ideas through a continuum of time and space. Failure to fulfill one's duty results in stagnation.

### **Chapter III – Threads and Themes**

Consistent with the analysis offered is a search for meaning and place for men as fathers. In particular the perspectives discussed above describe fatherhood in terms of a role within a time and place ascribed with meaning. The place that fatherhood is located largely establishes itself at the periphery of family life but never actually losing its role in the life of the family. The evolutionary theme that weaves its way through these scholars' work is that fatherhood has a definite and direct role in the family and in particular the socialization of children. However, with the exception of Parsons the role of fatherhood walks on a fine line. Through this evolution fathers maintain a role specific task toward work and financial support as well as an ethical and a moral component to their contributions to family sustenance. In other words, fathers are tied to family through moral obligation. The central themes threading through these scholars is recognizing that modern fatherhood consists of a role specific function identified in terms of its specialization and that it is driven by socio-economic and cultural forces. As compared with the paterfamilias, the substance that ties fathers to family is increasingly vague.

It is clear that the occupational pursuits of fathers have become of central importance. This is particularly present in the writings of Durkheim and Parsons where it has taken on a deeper significance and meaning as a father role, responsibility, and even identity that not only impacts his individual life but that of his family's. Man's work situates them and their family in the modern socio-economic hierarchy. Contrasted to the traditional family that was situated in the socio-economic hierarchy ascribed by family name and position the modern family finds its status as deriving from the father's occupation where he assumes an instrumental leadership role. His success in the latter, as

made clear by Parsons, is his first and most important responsibility as it is for his family and society to assure that he is available to fulfill his 'duty'. In turn, this is attributed meaning not only by material means but also in ethical and moral significance. In other words, it is the father's duty to work for the benefit of his family and in turn it is the family's responsibility as well as society's to assure that there is place for him. This work and its associated institutions will synthesize in the class struggle that prioritizes the safety and income of the wage laborer to sustain not only his sustenance but to assure the subsistence and well-being of his wife and family. This he was tied to through moral obligation that in turn gave him a family and a place within it. However, he will no longer have a direct role in raising children or in household management.

But why did men, and not women, assume this position as provider of the material means for existence? The answer to this question interpreted from the scholars reviewed here lies largely in biological reasoning or determinism or in Parsonian reasoning functionalism. Namely, because women gave birth they were assumed to be better care providers and biological reasoning also determined women to be less adaptable to a work environment whereas men, unable to give birth, and of stronger physical and mental character were determined as more suitable for 'productive' work<sup>12</sup>. Under such reasoning the birth of modern mothering came about that separated them from the direct means of production while modern fathering became inextricably associated with production that gave way to the sole income family. Binding men and women together for the ultimate purpose of reproduction and children was a morality that in its perimeter was driven by love and directed by the church and eventually the state

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<sup>12</sup> See Chodorow's critique for a deeper discussion (1978).

tying the man's income to his wife and children. This system of institutions evolved around industrial production.

Modern society saw the rise of a new gendered division of labor. The gender specific and specialized functions emerged, rationalized as reflecting the needs for an increasingly specialized society. In this model family roles became increasingly determined as psychological and democratic principles. The family, driven and shaped increasingly by technological innovations and democratic processes, would come to be the socializing terrain upon which children would learn their role in greater society. In so being the relative absence of the father, away at work, would come to be regarded largely in his capacity as the family's symbolic leader, and with the exception of Parsons and to a lesser extent Erikson his absence is problematic. His significance to the family would increasingly be discussed as determined by his affiliations and associations outside of the family domain to the point that his relational needs would be increasingly met there, as was clearly argued by Durkheim. His role within the family, and outside of that determined by the wealth he brought into the family, would be reduced to a presence and role although for Durkheim it would consist of diminishing importance and meaning. Given the significance of psychoanalysis and its influence on classical theory in the scholars reviewed the father role within the family would evolve around sexual drives and significance to the psycho-sexual development of children and of course their socialization. This role would be described differently as it evolved for boys and girls but as clearly outlined by Chodorow its impact would ultimately lie in socializing boys into heterosexual fathers and girls into heterosexual mothers...thus the term reproduction of motherhood emerges. Given that the reproduction of motherhood is possible so too must

we begin to think of the reproduction of fatherhood. However, this is a subject not touched on by the classical scholars but falls into the domain of contemporary scholars. Leaving the latter point behind the specialized gendered roles would be realized not only with respect to socializing roles outside of the family but also to reproduce a subordinate gender structure within the family all of which benefit men, a factor that of the theorists reviewed only Chodorow argues and of course many feminist scholars then and now. This subordination in its modern family context, argues Chodorow, derives from the socializing of boys and girls into gendered beings, ones that for Chodorow subordinates women to men but one that Parsons sees as unproblematic. In fact, as was evident in his work and popularized during its time Parsons argues for the efficiency and effectiveness of such a model in socializing children into their specialized roles in society. While Chodorow finds great insight in Parsons' work she is critical of the fact that Parsons denies the same privileges as associated with career orientation for women. Likewise, however, Chodorow fails to recognize the limitations and structural restraints of the provider role imposed on men as she describes a system of structures that benefit them at the expense of a woman's right to the same benefits. However, Chodorow's interest in the well-being of children through their socialization and direct care by both mothers and fathers would suggest that fathers would benefit also from more contact with their children, although it is the liberation of women that is of greatest interest to her. In broadening the feminist critique one can see the emergence of a wider liberation in its development and that lies in the liberation of the individual from constraints of industrial society and its gendered division. Chodorow's work, to be sure, only marks the transition

of a contemporary analysis to be developed by the likes of Anthony Giddens and Ulrich Beck.

Much like Chodorow's work Erikson's work on generativity offers an opening that transcends much of the limitations to classical theory and its association to the gendered division of labor. As a concept generativity has enormous applicability to a fuller range of developing a theory of fatherhood that incorporates much of the discussion forwarded in this text, the two central themes to this text being father work and father ethics. In addition, generativity incorporates a specifically flexible approach to the father role that transcends the more rigid role prescriptions as found in the work of Durkheim or Parsons. In addition, it does not take for granted through deductive reasoning that women's subordination to men does not come without its subordinating dimensions for men themselves, namely as contemporary researchers have begun documenting the ill effects the pressures and structural constraints that men's lives entail marked by suicide, early death, and mental illness.

Incorporating generativity into the field of study of fathers' lives permits analysis into the many components that the life of a man and father encompasses. Namely, it has the capacity to examine generativity for how it evolves and takes its forms but it can also examine what happens when generativity is unattainable, namely through the concept stagnation. In this sense generativity and stagnation demonstrate a capacity to account for the meaning and significance of man's life in its practical and ethical dimensions. In generativity's emphasis on 'doing' one realizes its importance to transcending time. Rapid social change is difficult on human societies and perhaps generativity is the sole means through which to slow down its pace and give some stability to our lives. Given

the contemporary changes that are undergoing the family and parenting roles and responsibilities generativity's potential and significance may be far greater than has yet been realized. Given its deep seated ethical consideration generativity may well give good cause to think about how society and social structures will give rise to new meaning and place for men and fathers.

A strength that transcends generativity is that it is not restricted to heterosexual men but could serve to neutralize a gender differentiation that for much of classical theory was regarded as natural. While gender is very much a base of classical theory generativity transcends it and offers the capacity to ascribe new meaning that above all incorporates ethical substance to humanity based on one's capacity to care and give, from which derives place and purpose. Generativity, then, is less about role but finds itself in understanding man's work and its ethics. It assumes, above all else, that man cares deeply about fathering and that fathering in its symbolic meaning transcends the biological reality of fatherhood through impregnation and extends that care to that of acts responsible to future generations. While this applies to generative fathering the concept generativity is gender neutral and can be put to test to adults regardless of their parental status. What is important to generativity is the ethical act of caring for the next generation. What it is measured by is culturally determined and can be expressed and measured in the manner of mothering, fathering, or simply any ethical act that expresses care for future generations be that through art, writing, or plumbing.

The exiting of the father has come about in a whirlwind of conflict much of which has described men in unfavorable terms. Given his dislocation in relation to the family coupled with his depiction in the past decades as ranging from "evil" to "inadequate" (see



next chapter) the place and meaning of fatherhood is not clear. However, the conflict that surrounds fatherhood is largely in response to his loss in real terms but also as a cultural and symbolic leader in a period marked by increasingly rapid change. The family and the father is not what it was in past centuries and the struggle that we witness reflects the scrambling of individuals and institutions to replace him. The overture that surrounds this struggle is conflict in a scramble to let go cultural ideals of what fatherhood should be as compared to what it is.

## **Chapter IV – Generativity Today**

The 1990's witnessed a small explosion of research on fatherhood using generativity as its theoretical base. Studies reflective of stagnation can also be witnessed. In addition, many studies on fatherhood can be classified under the concepts generativity and stagnation although they do not make reference to the terms.

The most prominent scholars developing the concept generativity with respect to fatherhood are David Dollahite and Alan Hawkins who clearly elaborate the term in *Generative Fathering: Beyond Deficit Perspectives* (1997). Their elaboration of generativity begins with the critique written by Dollahite and Hawkins "Beyond the Role Inadequacy Paradigm" (in *Generative Fathering*, 1997, p. 1-16). In this short essay Dollahite and Hawkins outline the parameters in which fatherhood has been studied, 'constructed', and politicized principally as something 'evil' or not good enough. In this essay they demonstrate the prominence in which fatherhood is discussed and created in a negative light. Similarly, they argue that research into fatherhood has virtually omitted any analysis of the 'father reality' and particularly those as associated with structural restraints (i.e. work; custodial laws). To this end they argue that social scientists have been largely influenced by political and social agendas that have resulted in a biased and limited understanding of fatherhood. Other works have generated a similar critique (e.g. Braver, 1998).

However, the point here is not to belabor the issue of the 'role inadequacy paradigm'. Rather, emphasis is directed at the development of generativity and in particular that as it relates to generative fathering, a term that I believe was first coined by Dollahite and Hawkins (1997). In the essay that follows the "Role Inadequacy Paradigm"

Dollahite and Hawkins lay down the contemporary framework for generativity and particular to generative fathering. It is of little surprise that the authors include the term 'ethic' in the title of their article ("Fatherwork: A Conceptual Ethic of Fathering as Generative Work" in *Generative Fathering*, 1997, p. 17-35). The reason for this is that, ultimately, generativity finds its basis in ethics although it is in every sense an ethics that is applied in day to day living through what the authors call generative work, that is embodied by moral man.

Generativity's counter, namely stagnation, has also been extensively examined namely in its use to understand what happens to fathers who due to life circumstances are restricted in caring or giving. The death of a spouse, loss of custody, loss of work, or imprisonment are frequent situations where stagnation can be found measured by depression, withdrawal, or suicide. Studies that have begun to measure stagnation frequently depict the conditions of men that are not so powerful and omnipotent as some would suggest. These studies (e.g. Braver, 1998; Kruk, 1993, Jacobs, 1986) depict the ill effects of stagnation on men's lives that also attempt to re-humanize the faces of fathers.

Generativity's strength thus lies two-fold in its capacity to study where man's care is realized and likewise where for circumstantial reasons it is stifled. In this sense it is etiologically sound and has many applications yet to be tried. Finally, it offers a concept that can not only be observed and qualitatively and quantitatively measured but also reduced to ethical and moral reasoning. It is in these respects that generativity has great potential for future application and discussion.

Of particular interest is the usefulness of generativity/stagnation in exploring contemporary society. Although recent studies such as Rod Beaujot's (2000) have shown

that fathers are taking on increasing amounts of childcare and house maintenance responsibilities, fatherlessness or father absenteeism and single mothering outside of marriage is prevalent and in the 1990's was on a sharp increase. What appears evident in most studies is that the presence of the father has a positive affect on children's well being (Wallerstein, 2000; Farrell, 2001). From these measures David Blankenhorn has deduced that a central feature to contemporary society will be a new 'class' system based on the presence or location of a father in a child's life (1995). Studies into the lives of adult children of divorce have only started to be formulated but early results indicate that they have a more difficult life experience (Wallerstein, 2000).

In recalling Erikson's epigenetic chart, generativity can only be fully realized upon the successful completion of previous stages. This presents society with a particular set of new problems that will need to be overcome by a generation entering adulthood. The present work, however, concerns itself with fathers and generativity and here we realize a substantial difference between fathers within a family where they raise children with their partner or wife and fathers who are absent from the details and intimacy of raising their children. As the Harvard longitudinal study of adult male development indicates family and children play a predominant role in the happiness of men's lives. Shy of this a mission or commitment to an altruistic act or set of acts results in similar happiness or sense of well being (Vaillant, 1999). In contrast, fathers who have little family relations and intimacy and do not find an act to replace it live lives marked by bouts of depression (Kruk, 1993, Braver, 1998). These findings should not come as a great surprise given the significance that society has attributed fatherhood and family.

But the problem in late-modernity is that while people struggle to break the bonds of previous structures individuals are very much entangled in the “iron cage” of modernity as it shaped itself from traditional customs. Ulrich Beck has argued that the nuclear family found its shape in connection with the class struggle (1992). In its shaping of the nuclear family it constructed the gendered division of labor while the class struggle assured its regeneration. The construction of the nuclear family, crystallized and bonded by a morality of love, gave place and meaning to individuals within a specific historical period. This form of society no longer exists and so too must its family structure evolve. In the shaping of individuals in our contemporary setting the site of conflict is the family and more precisely the relations between men and women. How we raise children and how we will raise them into the future is anything but clear.

In his essay titled “*Risk Society Revisited: Theory, Politics and Research Programmes*” Beck argues that we must break out of Weber’s iron cage and the “prison of categories and basic assumptions of classical social, cultural and political sciences” (2000, p. 221). In the same article he calls for a need to eliminate such notions as father, mother, and family for they no longer have the same meaning or significance that they once held. Beck is correct!

Society is no where close to eliminating these terms and in fact actively works to reshape and redefine parental roles and what constitutes family. This may not be all that bad because in terms of generativity it slows down the process of change through institution. However, what is clear is that mothering, fathering, and family have little in common with their ancestral place, meaning, and significance. They are not the same thing at all and it is clearly demonstrated today that fathers are as capable of mothering as

mothers are capable of fathering. This makes little sense when a person has been reduced to the actions of a verb. Eventually we must find new names that reflect a new place and significance, perhaps defined in its performance base. To some extent this has already begun as parenting covers a fuller range of responsibilities once separated by mothering and fathering while other terms such as step-wives, baby fathers, and social fathers have crept into our vocabulary. However, the very problem of how we will raise children still remains and outside of the couple children are situated at a site of conflict.

What then does this have to do with the study at hand and in particular that of generativity? Simply speaking, the project that we must embark on is reconstructing the way we live and raise children. The tensions that presently embroil the “battle of the sexes”, that frequently involves children, must be recognized as a set of constructs instituted from a previous era that now are crumbling. These institutions no longer have the same meaning and significance that they once had but the practical problems of survival continue including that of child rearing. In our present day struggles we will need to include recognizing the traces of historical significance to the meaning of family, mother, and father but simultaneously move away from something that increasingly no longer exists. In so doing we must ascribe new meaning and significance to people’s lives that reflect their personalized identity in a place recognized in time and space.

## **Conclusion**

The problem that has been addressed in this thesis is the decline of fatherhood. More specifically the discussion has focused on the conflict in response to the decline of fatherhood as evident in scholarly work. The problems that have arisen from the decline of fatherhood lie precisely in the void that it has left in raising children and its resulting impact on women and children while simultaneously it has left men with a deeper sense of loneliness and a search for life's meaning. This set of problems is unique to the processes of modernization that had reinvented the manner in which we live. Similarly, those manners and customs specific to the nuclear family and its gendered division of labor culminate as the site of contemporary conflict between men and women, childrearing, and the distribution of wealth. In our struggles to unravel the institutions that restrain us from our individuality that late-modernity dictates to us we must find new meaning to our lives as we reject old customs and terms that have little day-to-day application. We are many generations away from resolving these problems.

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